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AWARDS

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Rockstar grabs four Develop Awards
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Contents

DEVELOP ISSUE 86 AUGUST 2008

ALPHA

05 - 08 > DEV NEWS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE
Ubisoft argues the case for a UK games tax break, saying it could employ 1,000 in the country; Blitz details new XBLA partnership; and Zeemote courts developers to make games for its mobile phone peripheral

10 - 16 > OPINION & ANALYSIS
Owain Bennallack says UGC is still a minority interest amongst developers; our design expert argues the case for more socially relevant games; Rick Gibson details how to compete in online games development; and our legal expert offers advice on the rights and wrongs of reverse engineering

20 > IP PROFILE: BURNOUT
The history of Criterion's genre-busting and car-smashing IP

22 > STATS & STUDIO SALES CHART
The past month's deals and details, plus our exclusive sales chart listed by studio

24 > EDUCATION SPOTLIGHT
A round-up of five tools firms offering free (or cheap) apps to students

BETA

28 > GRAND THEFT AUTEUR
Looking back at ten years of Rockstar Games with president Sam Houser

32 > MAKING A SPLASH
How Splash Damage went from bedroom mod team to Develop Award winner

37 > THE BEST OF THE BEST
COVER STORY: Pictures and round-up of last month's Develop Awards

BUILD

46 - 52 > TOOLS NEWS
Looking at the latest tech releases and updates

55 > EPIC DIARIES
Mark Rein details an innovative new TV project built using Unreal Engine 3

57 > HEARD ABOUT: RACE DRIVER GRID
John Broomhall goes behind the scenes of Codemasters' latest racer

58 > TUTORIAL: DS DEVELOPMENT
Exient's top brass offer tips on how to best develop for Nintendo's handheld

develop DIRECTORY 61-72
STUDIOS, TOOLS, SERVICES AND COURSES

GOLD

74 > BYRONICMAN
Simon Byron is App in arms about the quality of iPhone games

develop
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ALPHA

ADVENTURES IN GAMES DEVELOPMENT: NEWS, VIEWS & MORE

"The largest recent financing rounds have focused on studios with strong online presences..."
Rick Gibson, p10

Blitz's new Chain of Command
News, p06

The history of Burnout
IP Profile, p20

Power List: Our exclusive studio ranking
Chart, p22

Edmondson: 'We can challenge Montreal – just give us a chance'

Government support could see huge UK expansion of workforce in the North East, says Ubisoft Reflections boss

by Ed Fear

Ubisoft Reflections studio head Gareth Edmondson has told *Develop* that Ubisoft would be happy to add an extra 1,000 members to its team in the North of England – echoing its activity in Montreal, Canada – if only the Government would support the UK games industry.

Edmondson, who is part of the Games Up campaign group lobbying for a tax break for games developers, told us: "Whenever I meet Lord Digby Jones, my line is 'would you like to create 1,000 jobs in Newcastle?' We'd love to be huge, but we've got a very limited number of vacancies, because other Ubisoft centres are more cost effective."

Ubisoft's Montreal base is one of the biggest single game development sites in the world, with over 1,600 developers at its large Quebec office. The Canadian team has plans in place to increase its staff headcount to 3,000 by 2013.

Ubisoft Montreal also recently expanded in the area by acquiring 80 person-strong visual effects house Hybride, behind films such as *300* and *Sin City*, as it looks to bring film effects knowledge into its game teams and also expand its game properties into the film and TV space.

Newcastle-based Reflections, meanwhile, has 110 staff all currently hard at work on the next Driver game.

"We have to outsource quite a lot of art, but we keep the core – the technology, the design, the innovation – in-house," added Edmondson

"We're safe as we are, but we'd love to have another 1,000 staff, to expand like Ubisoft Montreal. I mean, I love making games – at the moment, we have the resources to be working on one or two titles at a time, but I'd love to be able to work on more."

Much of sister studio Montreal's expansion comes with support from local government: Ubisoft works closely with Quebec authorities to achieve its ambitious plans for the studio. Government support has also been the catalyst behind the further development of Ubisoft's Casablanca studio in North Africa, which is planning for another 150 staff in the coming years, and its establishment of a new studio in Singapore, which aims to host 300 people.

> ***"The UK industry won't collapse, but it certainly isn't going to be as good as it could be..."***

Similarly, many of Ubisoft's recent studio openings have been in low-cost areas, where the company can simultaneously develop assets for less money as well as tap into new local talent pools. Within the past year, it's opened a studio in Sao Paulo, Brazil, hoped to be at 200 staff within the next four years; one in Kiev, Ukraine, started with 12 people and aiming to ramp up to 50 within its first year; and another in Chengdu, China, looking to have 200 people within twelve months.

Answering the often-heard argument against tax breaks, Edmonson added: "It's easy to pick a successful game like *Assassin's Creed* and say that, in hindsight, it would have done fine without tax credits, but would it have even been made without those tax breaks? While it was hugely successful, it needed to be – it was a massive project, with a massive budget."

While Montreal-style growth would in the North East of England would be ideal, Edmonson admits that the 110-man strong Reflections isn't going to falter without Government support – but it might not reach its full potential: "I don't think that the UK games industry is going to collapse without tax breaks, but it certainly isn't going to be as good as it could be. I'm really passionate about creating jobs up here in the North East.

"Games Up is about the opportunity that there ought to be for huge expansion in the UK, but it's not going to happen without Government support. That's why Ubisoft is supporting the initiative."
www.ubisoft.com

WORLD*VIEW* GLOBAL NEWS > p08

Editorial

Highly prized

Maybe it’s cruel, but a good way to judge the success of last month’s Develop Awards is by gauging the level of disappointment in the room amongst those who didn’t win when the victor on each was announced.

And, boy, were there some disappointed faces. There were people who expected to win; always, frankly, an arrogance-fueled mistake. And there were guests who just really, really wanted to win; always a sign that the prizes have become more and more coveted, and harder fought too. Something also proven by the record-breaking 600 people that came along to see the winners named.

But best of all were the people who honourably told me during the after-Awards festivities that, even though they lost out, the votes were all correct, and the right teams had been named as winners.

So congratulations once again to all the winners and, indeed, all finalists: you are still the shining stars of our corner of the world’s best creative industry.

Along with all the pictures from the Awards (starting on page 37), this month our features turn the spotlight on two of the key winners, and they couldn’t be more different. On the one hand, you’ve got Paul Wedgwood, the upfront, outspoken founder of Best Independent Developer Splash Damage – a man who said at the Develop Conference he had no respect for people making licensed games. On the other you have Sam Houser, the well-known, but publicity-shy co-founder and president of Rockstar Games, which took home the Visual Arts, Audio Accomplishment and Best In-House Developer prizes, plus the Grand Prix.

You’ll notice in our interviews with both, however, that they share qualities and views that can power a development company – be it one that employs 600 (in Rockstar’s case) or 60 (in Splash Damage’s) – to Award-winning greatness.

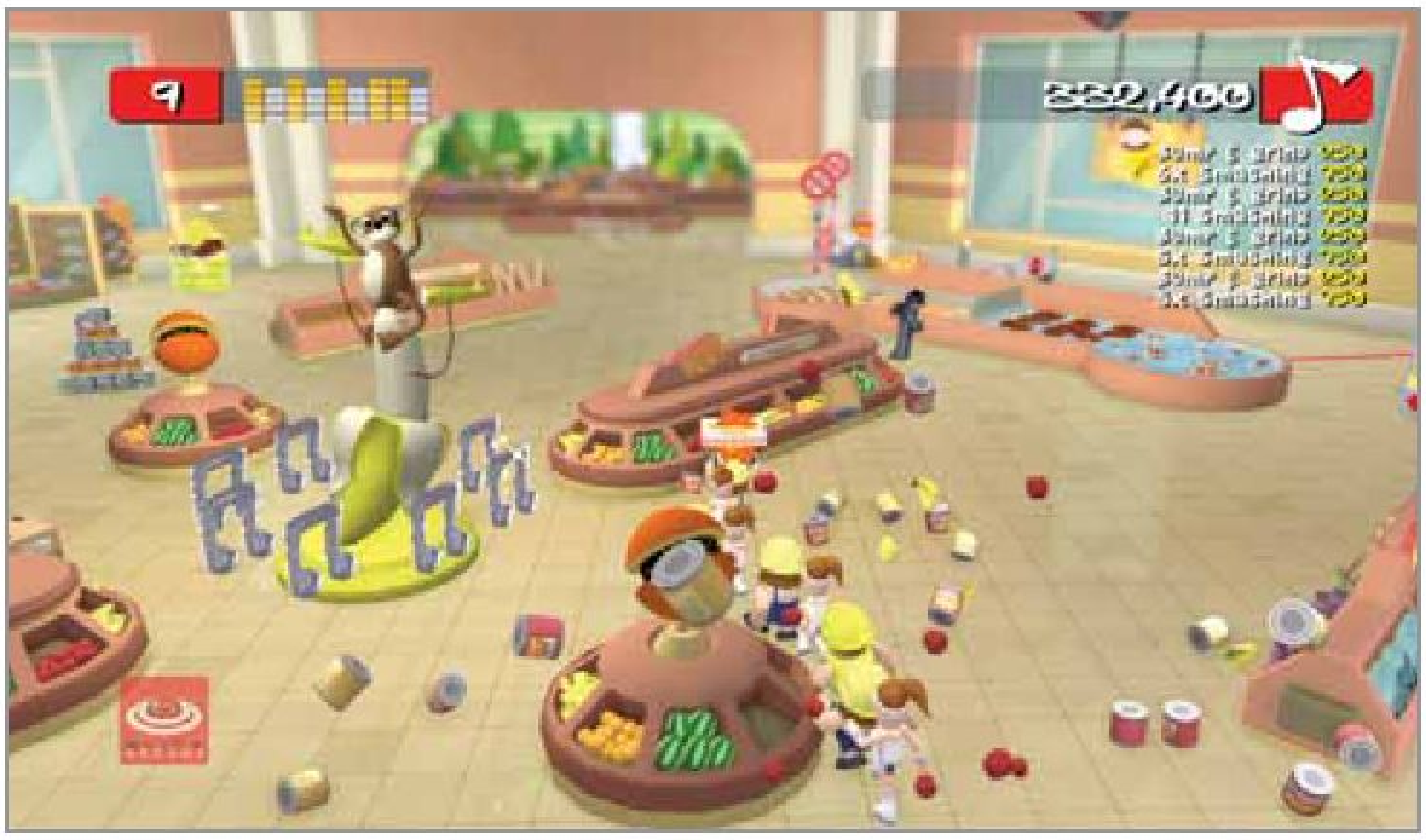
That’s things like vision, having strong enough willpower to use such vision creatively, and then supporting all of that with shrewd and narrow-minded (in a good way) business sense. Sure, all easy enough to put on paper, but these are the people that put it into practice, and as such should be listened to.

Michael French
michael.french@intentmedia.co.uk

Michael.

Blitz supports a

Innovative partnership sees long-running UK studio entrust new digital



by Ed Fear

UK independent studio stalwart Blitz Games has snapped up the rights to develop a game based on one of the much-praised Dare to be Digital student projects and has signed young, new studio 3rd Dimension Creations to develop the idea into its next XBLA, PSN and PC game.

Headquartered in Middlesbrough, 3rd Dimension Creations has been in business for less than four years. It was one of the first studios to come out of the University of Teesside and Middlesbrough Council’s DigitalCity project, which aims to help graduates get media businesses off the ground through subsidised office spaces, tutelage from industry veterans and business support.

The game it is working on for Blitz has a similar youthful slant – ‘conga line’ action title *CodaChain* (see ‘*Chain of Command*’) was a recent Dare to be Digital finalist.

“One of our strengths here at Blitz is that we hire individuals straight out of university because we can spot talent. These guys are enthusiastic, and they’re talented,” Blitz CEO Philip Oliver told Develop.

“They’re smaller, and therefore less experienced and have less infrastructure, but we bring that - they’re working on our technology.”

Indeed, Blitz’s in-house engine BlitzTech is being used to build the game for a simultaneous XBLA, PSN and PC launch. The unique partnership is feeding back into the development of BlitzTech as well – 3rd Dimension’s worry over memory footprint, for instance, has seen Blitz implement ambient occlusion into the engine for them.

> ***“Smaller games are easier to put externally, which gives us flexibility…”***
> ***Philip Oliver, Blitz Games***

Blitz has, however, otherwise kept its new partner at arms length, allowing the team to build and design the game in its own time. 3rd Dimension CCO Sean Crooks is full of praise for the way things have been run, describing the game as a “dream project”.

“The relationship we have with the people at Blitz is incredible,” he said. “They’ve put a huge amount of trust in us, and yet they’re not precious at all – there’s no rigid design doc, it’s a fluid two-way process. If we’ve got any trouble, even things not related to the project but about the studio, they’re there to give us advice and pointers.”

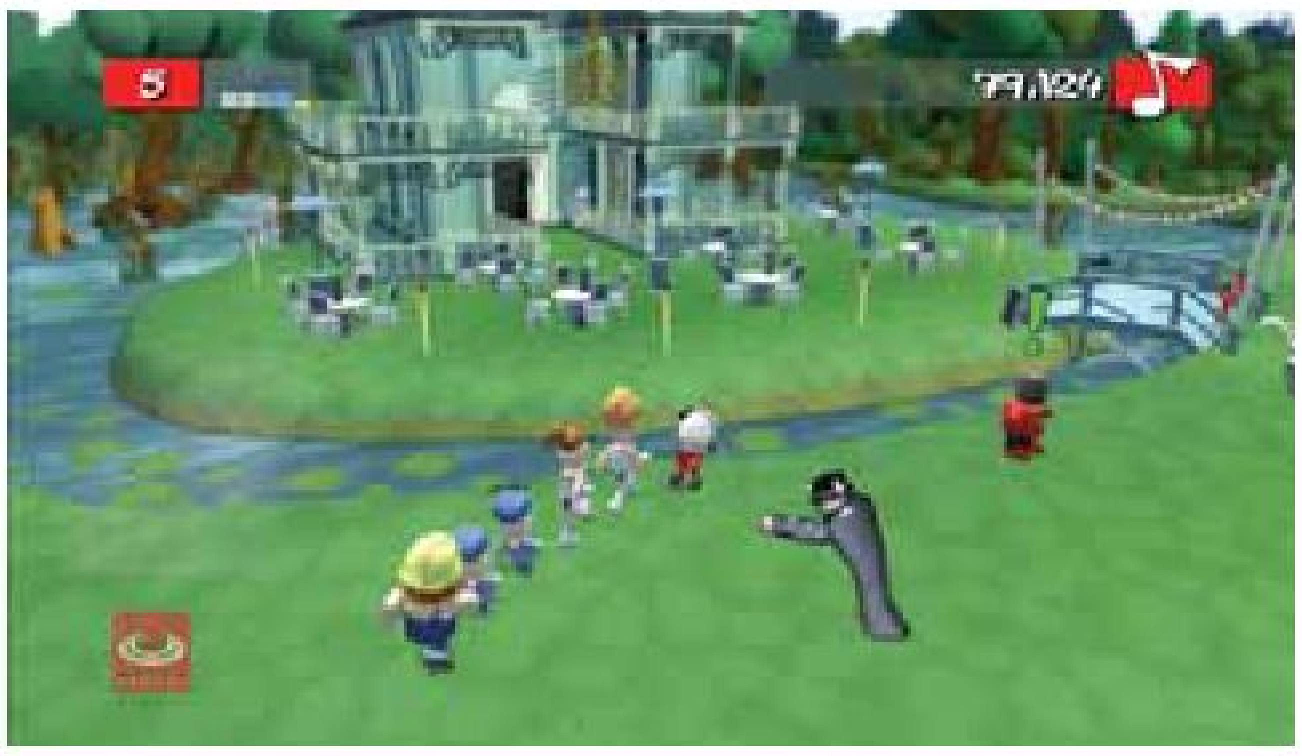
Ed Linley, project manager at Blitz, explains things from their side: “We came to them with quite a defined game document, and a framework of what the levels were going to be, but we welcome any input they have, and they have this great system of all sitting down to play the game together, making copious amounts of notes. I’m in touch with them every single day, bouncing ideas back and forth the whole time, so it’s been a fantastic relationship from both sides.

“We both egg each other on to greater heights, which can sometimes be missing when you do things internally; you don’t look at it from outside and see if this is as good as it can be. Because we’ve got two groups at the opposite ends of the country bouncing things backwards and forwards in between them, it creates this great feeling of making a game as good as it can be, and it’s been working really well.”

CodaChain is just one of Blitz’s recently announced quintet of games to be released under its Arcade label, and is one of three that is developed out-of-house. Oliver adds that the label was set-up to not only capitalise on download channels, but

new 'Chain gang

download IP to small-scale independent studio in the North East



ABOVE: The 3rdDC team. Front row (left to right): Chris Hodgson (3D artist), Pete Bones (network programming), Neil Holmes (producer), Caleb Lowe (animator). Back row (left to right): James O'Hare (3D artist), Tom Chambers (3D artist), Sean Crooks (CEO/Creative Director), Martin Wright (programming), Dave Allanson (CEO/technical director). Not pictured: Simon Halliday (3D artist)

also foster a new subcontracted development model: "The business plan behind Arcade is to do smaller games. Part of the reason of doing it is creativity: new, fresh, original games without having to sit within a constrictive licence.

"But the other part is the chance that it gives you: smaller games are easier to put externally, which gives us flexibility."

Given that some independent studios have left their initial Xbox Live Arcade ambitions behind due to disillusions over the new royalty share and higher-than-anticipated barriers to entry, should Blitz's initial Arcade onslaught prove a success it could herald a brand new access point for smaller, less proven studios that get the help, support, and most importantly muscle, of a bigger developer.
www.3rddc.co.uk

CHAIN OF COMMAND

CodaChain is described as being 'based on a conga mechanic', tasking the player to rebel against the mysterious music-hating Silencers and bring back music to the city. Picking up civilians dotted around the game's large levels causes them to join your conga line, affecting your abilities (joggers make your line faster, for example, and builders giving you the ability to push heavier items away) and also dynamically altering the music. Solo, the soundtrack is little more than tinny headphone percussion, but add a Love Walrus and you'll have a deep soulful bass layered on top; add a Granny for some humming or a builder for more defined beats.

It's clear that the extended development time has let the team heap on additional touches to the game, the origin of many of which are no doubt rooted in the company's ethos of letting everyone get involved in every aspect of the game's creation. "People like dabbling," says Crooks, "and while they might not be the best at it, it's good to let them try out different things. I don't think there's anyone at the team who hasn't scripted at least one puzzle in *CodaChain*. Everyone has full input on everything - no-one is ignored."

In all, the experience is certainly a unique one, feeling like a wider-appeal Katamari Damacy with a Saturday morning cartoon aesthetic. The story-based single-player mode will win fans, but it's the online multiplayer, which lets players steal members from other people's conga lines, is where the real laughs could lie – especially if 3rd Dimension's play-focused organic design process pays off.

develop mobile

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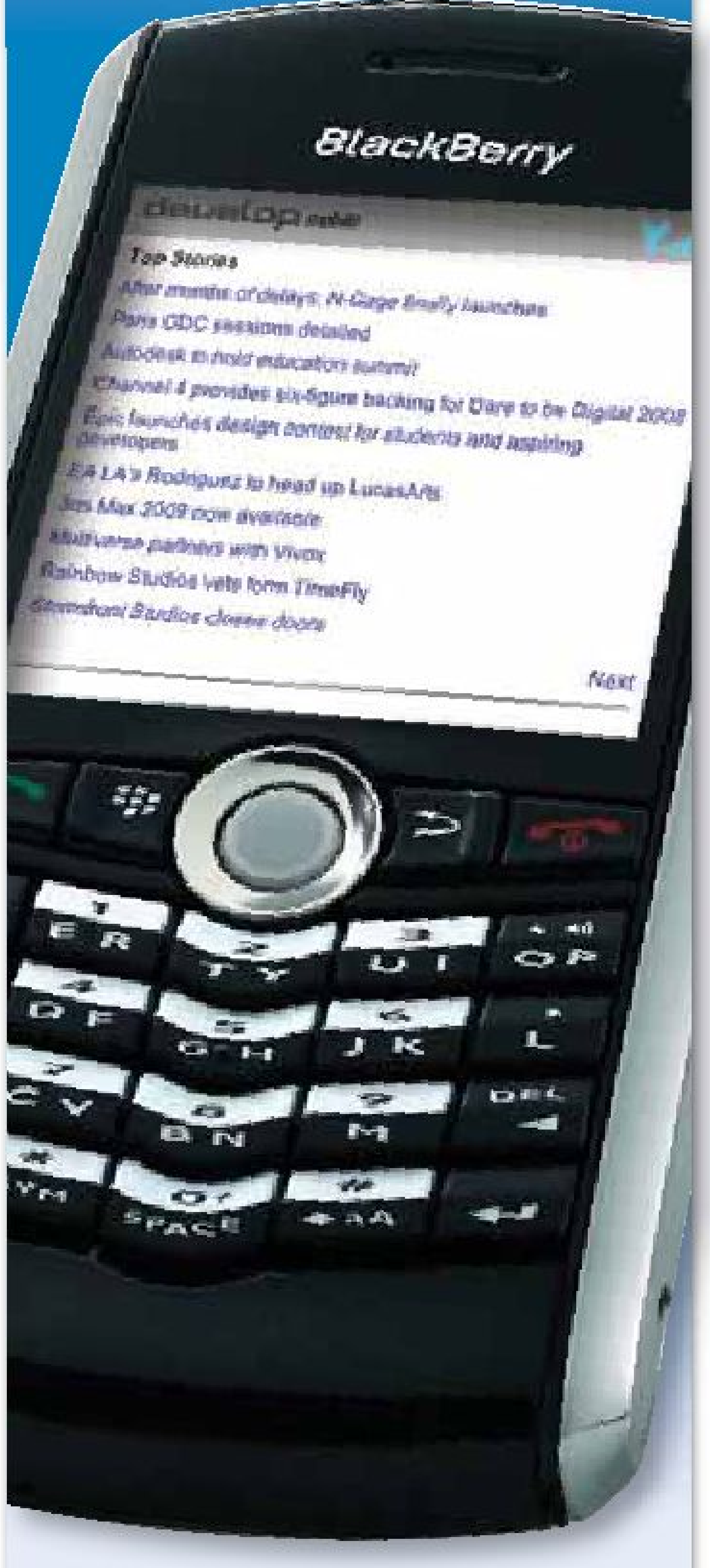

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Zeemote courts top mobile studios

Momentum builds for Bluetooth mobile gaming joystick

by Ed Fear

IF YOU THOUGHT THAT Zeemote's JS-1 wireless mobile gaming controller *(previously featured in Develop issue 80)* was little more than a gimmicky peripheral, think again – it has won over many of the top studios in the mobile development space, with a number of heavyweight studios making games for the peripheral.

The likes of Gameloft, Digital Chocolate, Sega of America, iPlay, Glu, and UK teams Finblade and Tag Games are all making games that utilise the Bluetooth joystick.

Speaking to *Develop*, Zeemote's vice president of worldwide sales Jim Adams said: "We now have 13 of the top 15 mobile developers signed up to make Zeemote ready games. We're thrilled to have so many great development partners."

The company is also soon to launch its Zeemote Ready branding for games, which lets players know that the game has been through a rigorous quality control program and will function seamlessly with the JS-1. The programme isn't a requirement for developers, says Adams, but acts as a partnership to make sure that the games embed Zeemote functionality to the highest potential – and developers will get free promotion when Zeemote launches its new games portal.

> ***"We're thrilled to have so many great development partners…"***
> ***Jim Adams, Zeemote***

The controller, which features an analogue stick and four customisable buttons, also now has its first release date. A deal has been struck with Sony Ericsson to bundle together the device with Sony Ericsson W760i Walkman phones and two Zeemote Ready-certified games across hundreds of retail stores in Holland between August and October. North American and Asian launches are planned for 2009.

www.zeemote.com

DEVELOP DIARY

YOUR COMPLETE GAMES DEVELOPMENT EVENT CALENDAR FOR THE MONTHS AHEAD…

CASUAL GAMES FORUM
October 30th
London, UK
www.tandemevents.co.uk

A new event from the organisers of the Develop conference and expo, the Casual Games Forum is a one-day event during the London Games Festival focused on the emergent casual market.

CEDEC
September 9th to 11th
Tokyo, Japan
cedec.cesa.or.jp

OK, so the conference is in Japan and will be in Japanense – but the cream of development talent is talking at this event, including Nintendo's Shigeru Miyamoto and Capcom's Keiji Inafune.

AUGUST 2008

GCDC 2008
August 18th to 20th
Leipzig, Germany
www.gcdc.eu

GAMES CONVENTION
August 20th to 24th
Leipzig, Germany
www.gc-germany.com

SEPTEMBER 2008

CEDEC
September 9th to 11th
Tokyo, Japan
cedec.cesa.or.jp

WOMEN IN GAMES
September 10th to 12th
Warwick University, UK
www.womeningames.com

AUSTIN GDC
September 15th to 18th
Texas, USA
www.gdconf.com

OCTOBER 2008

TOKYO GAME SHOW
October 9th to 12th
Tokyo, Japan
tgs.cesa.or.jp/english/

CASUAL CONNECT KYIV
October 22nd to 24th
Kyiv, Ukraine
kyiv.casualconnect.org

CASUAL GAMES FORUM
October 30th
London, UK
www.tandemevents.co.uk

NOVEMBER 2008

GAME CONNECTION
November 5th to 7th
Lyon, France
www.game-connection.com

MONTREAL GAMES SUMMIT
November 6th & 7th
Montreal, Canada
www.sijm.ca/2008/

IGDA LEADERSHIP FORUM
November 13th & 14th
San Francisco, USA
www.igda.org/leadership/

GAME CONNECT: ASIA PACIFIC
November 19th to 22nd
Brisbane, Australia
www.gameconnectap.com

FEBRUARY 2009

CASUAL CONNECT KYIV
February 10th to 12th
Hamburg, Germany
europe.casualconnect.org

DICE SUMMIT
February 18th to 20th
Las Vegas, USA
www.dicesummit.org

MARCH 2009

GDC 09
March 23rd to 27th, 2009
San Francisco, USA
www.gdconf.com

GAMES GRADS 09 - SOUTH
March 24th
London, UK
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GAMES GRADS 09 - NORTH
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MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS

by Rick Gibson

How online games development changes everything

Some of the biggest financial transactions involving games companies in recent years have been by traditional media companies buying studios in the online space. Big media firms moving into games have tended to stick with what they know – mass market entertainment. In parallel, most of the recent large financing rounds in the UK's games industry have focused on businesses with strong online presences – Jagex, King.com and Realtime Worlds. Demonstrating steady revenue flows plus a hands-on approach towards customers reassures investors with fingers burnt from backing studios trying to create elusive hits on console platforms via third party publishers.

We often hear that online is the future, but what does it take to operate in the online space? How easy might it be to make the transition? A quick peek at online companies reveals fundamental differences between firms with offline and online models. Some of these deep-rooted differences are listed to the right.

A fundamental difference between the two models is the way that they treat IP. For traditional studios, hit games IP is their *raison d'etre*; for online studios, IP is often secondary to running the service that delivers it. Each company rides the hit-driven nature of the games business differently. Services often hedge their bets by placing them on a wide variety of games, so that the high ratio of hits to misses plays in their favour: more games with long tails deliver value over a protracted period of time. Offline studios effectively place larger bets on a smaller number of games, leaving them at the mercy of the same hit:miss ratio, using commercial models that rarely deliver royalty upside and often result in working for hire on someone else's IP.

To make this exercise more useful, I've deliberately raised the contrast levels to make the differences stand out. And there are companies that comfortably do both. But making the transition from offline to online is far from easy, requiring a major reorientation in strategy, and restructuring of resources and finances. It's a far-reaching leap that may explain why there are so few dedicated online games studios in the UK. Arguably it's a leap that many UK studios will have to make to stay competitive and keep pace with territories that are producing some of Europe's fastest growing and most profitable games companies – which also happen to be online, service-driven ones.

METRIC	OFFLINE STUDIO	ONLINE STUDIO
Resources and technology		
% staff in development	95-100% of staff work to create a handful of games/year	25-60% of staff work on creating content that is released continually
% staff in support	0-5% work in finance, admin, HR, often these are outsourced	40-75% of staff work in customer support, finance and billing (Blizzard has 75%, Jagex 50%)
Technology	Mix of 1st and 3rd party middleware and tools	Mostly proprietary tools, servers, customer account and relationship management tools
Partners	Publishers are the primary partner, with hardware manufacturers and outsourcers for development	More evenly spread between portals, aggregators, serving, support, payment companies
Commercial and marketing		
Who funds development/ earns most upside?	Publisher takes financial risk and lion's share of upside	Online studios commonly self-fund development, and take highershare of upside
Commercial model	1 dominant model - advance + royalty. Few variants are accepted by publishers	Varies widely between subscription, premium download, advertising and micro-transactions
Likelihood of overages	Rare and unpredictable (12% of largest studios' revenues in 2006); bigger development costs = lower chance of royalties	More common and predictable, with frequency increasing as per title production costs fall
Revenue flow	Lumpy: advances at milestones, royalties 3-18 months post-launch (if lucky), with short-medium term longevity in all but a few cases	Continuous: revenues start at launch (if self-managed service), may trickle in at start but can be very long lasting indeed
Marketing responsibility and methodology	Publisher spends $millions on traditional above & below the line marketing campaigns	Service provider cuts distribution deals with portals for placement and affiliate revenue shares
Finance		
Ability to raise finance	Low. The few funding sources are usually reliant on publisher agreements and VCs rarely back traditional studios any more.	Medium-high. Self-publishing and control of customers brings steadier revenues from a growing market, driving an investment bubble
Valuations	5-10 times profit – offline studios have been acquired for £2m-£40m	5-10 x turnover – online studios have been acquired for £50m-£350m
Revenues / staff member	£45,000 is an average for UK independent studios (large sample group)	£185,000 is an average for UK online studios (small sample group)
Success metric	Unit sales with strong correlation with average review scores	Active monthly user volume and average revenues per user
Strategy		
Highest risk point for the company	Collapse between projects after growing too fast or betting that past success = future success	User churn following poor service provision, infrequent content refresh or poor serving following too rapid growth
Levers of success	Strength in execution including IP creation, gameplay, technology and production management	Strength in customer & community management, building portfolio of games & services and partnerships
Primary company goal	Create smash hits and sell to a publisher	Create scale (millions of users/month) and sell to a private equity or big media company

Rick Gibson is a director at Games Investor Consulting, providing research, strategy consulting and corporate finance services to the to the games, media and finance industries
www.gamesinvestor.com

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VARIABLE DECLARATIONS

by Owain Bennallack

Why isn't everyone copying Will Wright?

Consoles are connected, we're all on Facebook, and Will Wright's *Spore* has a development team of thousands. Other developers should wake up and take the hint.

Will Wright expected *Spore* creature creators to produce 200,000 beasties in a couple of months. In reality users took 22 hours to create 100,000. Within a week the menagerie numbered one million. When Wright spoke to E3 last month – 18 days after the launch of his *Spore* content creation tool – the Sporepedia boasted 1,756,869 species, or more species than on Earth. All this for a game that isn't even out yet.

If user-generated content (UGC) mania can surprise Will Wright, what chance for the rest of us? Not only is the Maxis founder a genius, he also saw with *The Sims* how engaging and empowering a community took off. Paradigm shifts are scary. Perhaps it's safer to work on a first-person shooter with a deathmatch mode, and wait for someone else to invent the future?

LittleBigPlanet is a posterchild for UGC games; but it's still just one of the few which boast user-generated content functions

SOCIAL CUES

The positive news is that awareness of social networking and UGC's potential in games has blossomed.

Speaking to developers in late 2006 about making Web 2.0-inspired games a key theme at Develop in Brighton in 2007, we were met with polite bemusement. The next 12 months saw Media Molecule's *LittleBigPlanet* wow E3, GDC go big on Web 2.0, Microsoft's Chris Satchell keynote the Brighton conference on the same subject, and Facebook sign-up most of the UK industry for a summer of clicking through pictures of their colleagues drinking with old university pals.

Now everyone gets it, to the extent that Web 2.0 is a hackneyed, faintly embarrassing phrase, and Facebook no more exciting than Hotmail. Yet we're still not seeing the push from the industry I'd expect, given the proven power of network effects and UGC to engage gamers, as is being amply demonstrated by *Spore*.

The console makers' E3 keynotes name-checked the user-driven phenomenon, but were light on announcements. On social networking, developments amounted to a Swap Shop of each other's best platform community features (for instance: Microsoft's 360 Avatars), and hearing yet again how cool PlayStation Home will be… eventually. Where were the big first-party projects putting networked social gaming and UGC to the fore?

Sony proffered *LittleBigPlanet*, again, and Nintendo hinted that *Animal Crossing: City Folk* might enable more UGC sharing. Microsoft concentrated on its Xbox Live overhaul, and its new Community channel – interesting, but not about games. More pertinent is the Xbox Live Community Games service, which brings Kongregate-style user moderation to XNA output. It was revealed back at GDC and was barely mentioned at E3.

Electronic Arts' press conference was more on-target. It boasted Shawn Fanning, the infamous disruptor behind Napster, discussing Rupture, his game community service that EA acquired for $30million. EA already has a sort of proprietary gamertag system in production called Nucleus. But Rupture is an open system. Any developer or publisher can use it to enable their gamers to follow their friends across Rupture-enabled titles.

While EA doesn't have a great track record of collaborating with external companies (Renderware, remeber?), Rupture makes great sense. Why wouldn't I want my PlayStation 3-owning friends to see my achievements on Xbox 360? Why should a FIFA-owning pal be left out just because he bought a different console?

> **"We're still not seeing the push behind user-generated content that I expected from the industry…"**

A cross-platform social networking service puts the emphasis where it belongs – on gamers, and games. You can appreciate how concerned EA must be about hardware makers getting too chummy with 'its' gamers. Other publishers should be equally nervous, which may bode well for Rupture's future.

ALL TOGETHER NOW

As for bona fide social networking or UGC-inspired games, well, certain studios are making progress. Criterion's *Burnout Paradise* was a smart Web 2.0-ish evolution of the racing genre. Relentless incorporated user-generated quizzes into the new online PS3 version of *Buzz!* (harder than you might think). And Sports Interactive's *Football Manager Live* should be worth waiting for.

Some start-ups are focusing on creating social games for MySpace and Facebook. Founded by mobile games veterans, Playfish is 'working on combining the best elements of casual games, social networks, MMOGs and virtual worlds to create entirely new, more social ways of enjoying great games together'. It's released three titles, all of which are in the Facebook Apps top ten.

Games had a headstart long ago with MMOGs, of course; the likes of Second Life and *Eve Online* are way ahead in exploring these opportunities. Still, I think we've only just begun. We won't be shocked in a few years by thousands of enthusiasts creating content for games like *Spore*, but rather that in 2008 Will Wright was so lonely in championing them.

Owain Bennallack is executive editor of *Develop*. He edited the magazine from its launch until its February 2006 issue. He has also worked at *MCV* and *Edge*, and has provided consultancy and evaluation services to several leading developers and publishers. He is also chairman of the *Develop* conference advisory board.

DESIGN DOC

by The Alpenwolf

Social Mood de la mode

If you subscribe to the Develop Daily email list, then you've surely noticed the announcement of studio closure after studio closure.

The retail market is being shaken up too; Funcom may have been one of the first game publishers to announce their future shift to exclusive digital distribution, but they will almost surely not be the last. And just because the games industry is relatively recession-proof, thanks to its unusually high value per pound compared with other entertainment options, doesn't mean that what is taking place in the world outside our electronic escapes does not have some effect on the games people want to play.

It is a fairly well-known fact that skirt lengths tend to correlate surprisingly well with the stock market. During bull markets, skirts tend to rise with the price of equities; the all-time market highs of the recent past happened to coincide with the appearance of the booty shorts that have decorated many a racing game cover.

On the other hand, when the markets are being ravaged by the bear and prices have fallen, long skirts that keep the ankles chastely covered tend to be in vogue. Many readers are probably too young to remember the last serious recession, which took place during the early Thatcher years, but if you look at pictures from that era, you will quickly see that no one was flashing any whale tails from beneath those skirts that could have easily served as frigate sails in an emergency at sea.

This is but the most famous example of the budding young science of socionomics, which is the study of social moods and their effect on economics. The jury is still out on its practical effectiveness, but a large body of evidence has been gathered which strongly suggests certain correlations that are likely to be useful when contemplating how different sorts of games are likely to be received when they come to market. Because the game industry is so young – it was still in its first blush of youth when the last big economic expansion began – it's hard to draw any useful conclusions from the games of the past. But, I suggest that by looking at the popular historical trends in films and books, some interesting correlations become apparent.

It's a big hit at the moment, but would Super Mario Galaxy have been poorly received if the socio-economic climate was more dismal?

> **"Just because the games industry is relatively recession-proof doesn't mean things taking place in the world outside games doesn't matter..."**

Compare some of the most popular novels of the Great Depression with those of the booming late 1990s. The bestselling novels of the 1930s include: *Anthony Adverse*, *It Can't Happen Here*, *Gone With the Wind*, *Rebecca*, and that cheery, happy tale, *The Grapes of Wrath*. In contrast, the best-sellers of the late 1990s mostly consisted of Danielle Steel's romances, Tom Clancy's odes to military hardware, and John Grisham's stories about lawyers making lots of money. While one might well argue that being forced to read the latter collection is more likely to inspire a literate man to kill himself, there's no question that the social mood implied by the former group is much darker.

It's much the same with movies. Think of the difference between the British films being produced by Hammer during the postwar period compared with the Merchant Ivory productions of the more prosperous Eighties and Nineties. In America, the recession of the Carter years saw the birth of numerous slaughterhouse franchises such as Halloween and Friday the 13th; until very recently, the only horror films being made were parodies such as the Scary Movie series.

So, what does this indicate for game design? If we are entering a period of economic contraction, then the social mood will darken and thereby inspire a taste for darker themes in entertainment. This means games that have more in common with *GTA IV* and *Age of Conan* will likely do better than expected, while more light-hearted games such as *Diner Dash* and *Super Mario Galaxy* will tend to disappoint. Games with art that is more somber and shadowy should do better than those with bright-colored, cartoonish styles. Musical themes will likely incline towards the more gothic and heavy rather than sprightly and cheerful.

Now, there are always exceptions to the overall trend, so it's entirely possible that the bestselling game of 2010 will be a brightly colored side-scroller starring a little girl in pigtails who collects puppies, kittens, and butterflies to the tune of 'Wake Me Up Before You Go Go' by Wham! But a much better bet would be a terrifying design revolving around the werewolves of London, or a historical simulation set in Whitechapel entitled Jack.

The Alpenwolf is a professional game designer who has been active in the industry for 17 years and designed games for some of the largest American and Japanese publishers. He has been known to visit Ironforge in the company of a large white wolf. design@alpenwolf.com

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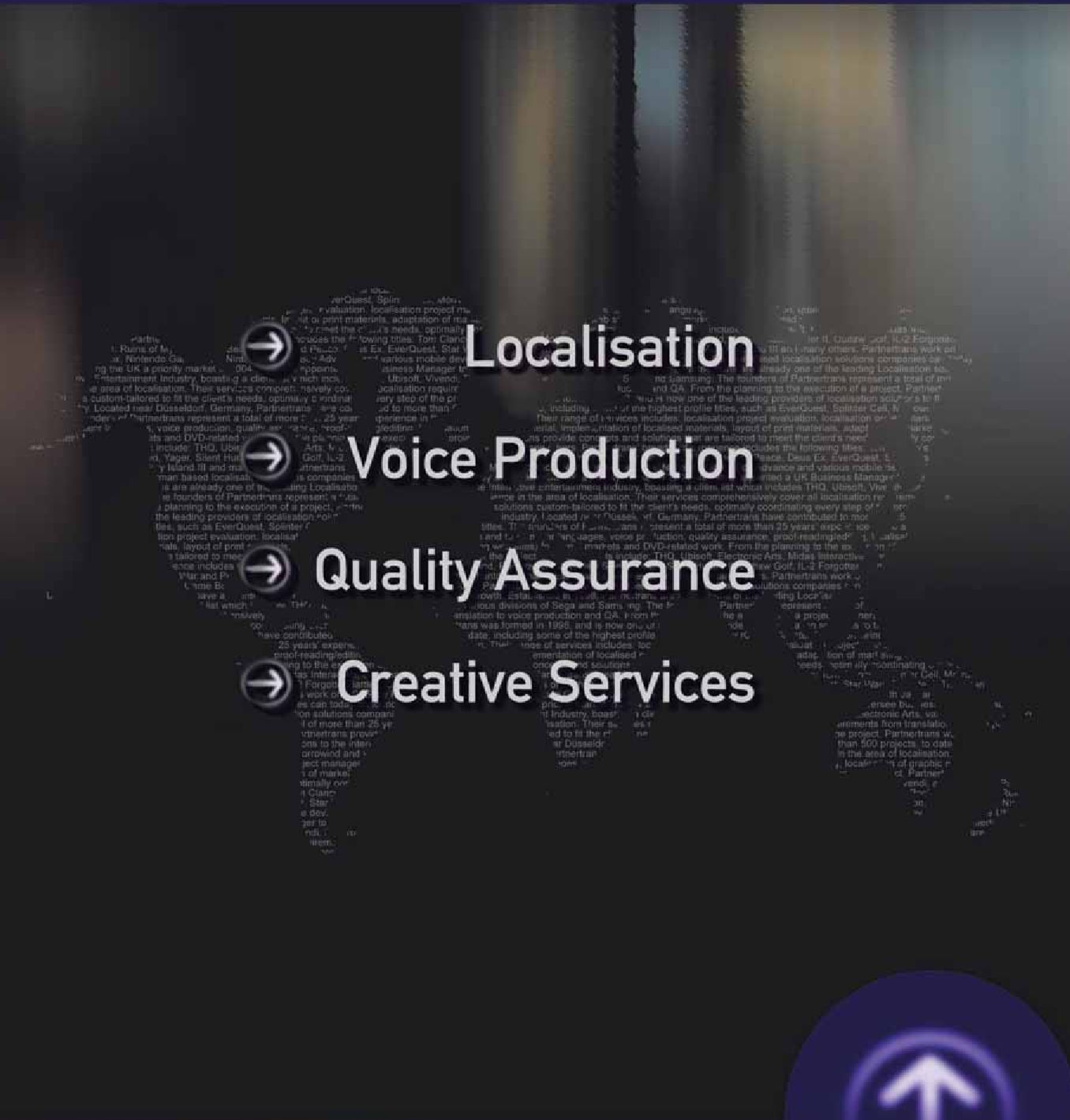
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SHERIDANS

The rights and realities of reverse engineering

External specialists can bring big benefits to game developers, but both sides need to protect their future business interests before they start working together, says **Tahir Basheer**, partner at media law firm Sheridans…

***Tahir Basheer** is a partner at Sheridans, the entertainment law firm. tbasheer@sheridans.co.uk*

Twenty years ago, a lone programmer could create a video game. Today 50 to 100 people often isn't enough, with developers contracting skilled outsiders to work on specialist problems such as network support or rigging animation.

This adds another layer of complexity to the production of modern video games. Create a game in-house, and it should be protected by the IP obligations in your employment contracts. With an external company – typically requiring in-depth access to your game-in-progress – you'll need new provisions to ensure IP is protected.

What if you're the specialist, contracted to enhance a third-party's content, and you want to develop a similar product in future? Will you face onerous restrictions? While you'll certainly need to consult your lawyers to ensure your side of the bargain is adequately protected, there are general principles and laws that cover both parties' interests.

RESTRICTIONS TO WATCH OUT FOR

If your intended product is going to be produced completely independently of the third-party's content, without using any information obtained in your dealings with them, then you're normally free to produce a similar product. However before you're allowed to start work on the software, the third-party may ask you to agree to some terms such that:

- You may not decompile, disassemble or reverse engineer their product.
- Their product or any documentation may not be copied or otherwise reproduced.
- You enter into confidentiality provisions lasting at least the length of the agreement and for a period after the agreement. Trade secrets must stay confidential for as long as they qualify as trade secrets under the law.

These contractual restrictions will apply to you if you intend to produce a product by decompiling, copying or adapting the third-party content. There may also be potential patent issues if your new product encroaches on any patents applied for or registered by the third-party.

THE RIGHT TO REVERSE ENGINEER

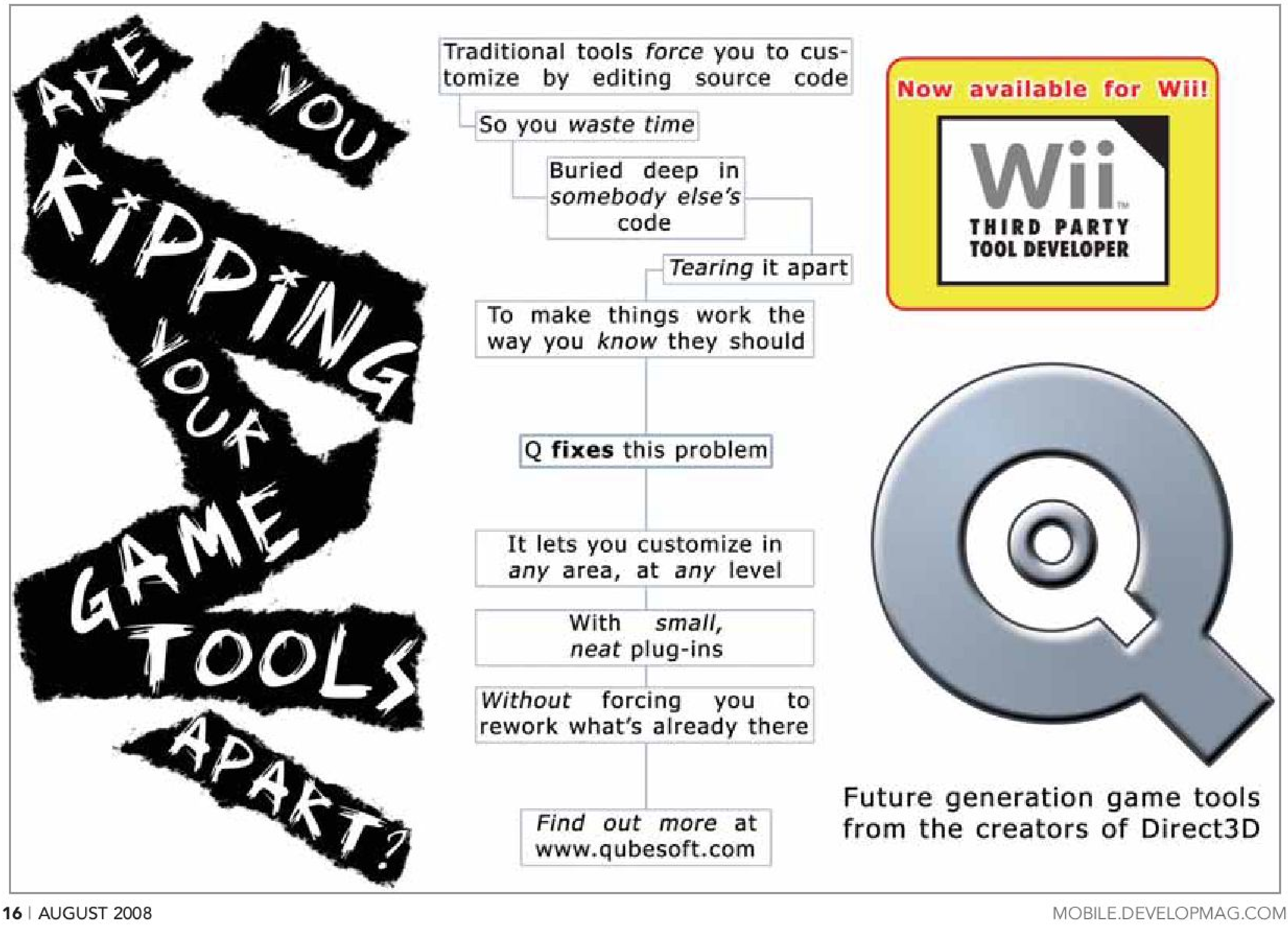
If you're contracting an external firm to work on your project, you might well consider further clauses to restrict its ability to capitalise on its access to your content. However, the EC Software Directive – implemented in the UK by amendments to the Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988 – prevents certain rights of software licensees from being excluded by contract, including:

- The right to decompile (or effectively reverse engineer) a program if, broadly, it is necessary in order to operate with another program.
- The right to make a backup copy if necessary (as opposed to prudent) for its lawful use.
- The right to observe, study or test the functioning of a computer program in order to determine the ideas and principles that underlie it.

None of these can be excluded by contract.

MUTUALLY ASSURED CONSTRUCTION

Collaboration is a feature of modern software development. To benefit, both parties need to consider their arrangements with each other with respect to what is fair and reasonable to protect their current assets and any future developments that they might want to work on. In short, a working relationship based on mutual trust – backed up by a strong legal framework.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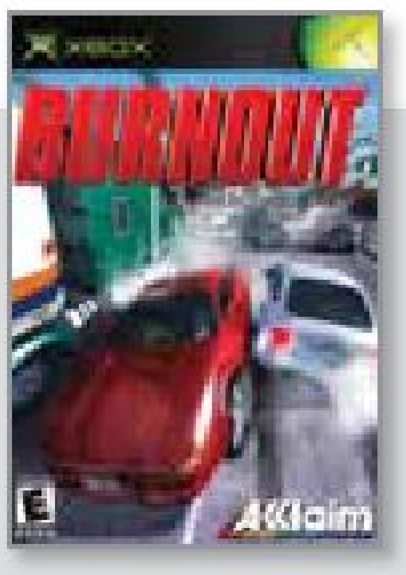
GREATBRITISHGAMES

Burnout

Nick Gibson buckles up for a high-speed tour of the UK's most destructive games IP…

BURNOUT – THE STATS



ESTIMATED TOTAL UNIT SALES:

16 million (console and PC)

NUMBER OF ITERATIONS:

Seven games

GAME RELEASE TIMELINE

1997: *Sub-Culture*
(Criterion's first internally-developed game, UbiSoft)
2000: *Burnout* (Criterion Games, Acclaim Entertainment), RenderWare 3 created
2002: *Burnout 2: Point of Impact* (Criterion Games, Acclaim Entertainment)
2004: *Burnout 3: Takedown*
(Criterion Games, Electronic Arts)
2005: *Burnout Legends*
(Criterion Games, Electronic Arts)
2005: *Burnout Revenge*
(Criterion Games, Electronic Arts)
2007: *Burnout Dominator*
(EA UK, Electronic Arts)
2008: *Burnout Paradise*
(Criterion Games, Electronic Arts)

OWNERSHIP HISTORY

1993: Criterion Software founded as a wholly-owned subsidiary of Canon Inc. to specialise in the development of graphics rendering technology.

1997: Criterion forms internal games development studio to help development and marketing of its struggling middleware business.

1999: *Burnout* rights secured by Acclaim.

2002: *Burnout 2: Point of Impact* publishing rights secured by Acclaim Entertainment.

2004: *Burnout 3* publishing rights acquired by Electronic Arts.

2004: Criterion Software Group acquired by Electronic Arts for $68m in cash. Acclaim Entertainment goes into liquidation.

CREATOR: No single individual credited

GAME INCEPTION AND GROWTH

Burnout was created in 1999/2000 by the internal games development division of Criterion Software Group. It made use of RenderWare 3, at the time the most recently released version of the company's core middleware software and was used by Criterion to assist in the development of RenderWare 3 and its marketing and sale. Although reworking the well-known racing genre, the game was innovative in that it was designed as an arcade-style car racing game with a greater emphasis on ease of use and instant gameplay gratification rather than the accurate modelling of car dynamics and less immediate gameplay features in contemporary franchises of the time such as *Gran Turismo* and *Colin McRae*.

Unlike most of the successful racing games of the period, *Burnout* was set on urban and country roadways (rather than dedicated racing tracks) amongst non-racing traffic as well as other racing competitors. Such 'illicit' gameplay mirrored *Grand Theft Auto* in enabling gamers to do things on screen which they would not be able to do (or would be prosecuted for doing) in real life. Players were rewarded for setting time records, finishing ahead of opponents and, uniquely, for driving aggressively. As the *Burnout* series progressed, more emphasis was placed on the latter gameplay concept and the accompanying slow-motion replays that allowed players to show off their driving stunts and recklessness in a highly cinematic format.

Burnout 3: Takedown was a pivotal release, which condensed the kernel of aggressive gameplay at the heart of the game into the main game mechanic. The first game published by Electronic Arts, *Burnout 3* placed the concept of causing your opponents to crash spectacularly and driving as recklessly as possible at the heart of the gameplay, with a 'burn meter' encouraging players to drive head-on at incoming traffic or corner at great speed. The combination of the two dramatically opened up the North American market, a territory in which the previous *Burnout* titles had failed to make a critical or commercial impression under the auspices of Acclaim Entertainment. This trend was continued with *Burnout Revenge*, *Burnout Legends* and *Burnout Dominator* (the first to be developed outside of

Criterion) which incorporated varying elements from all three previous games.

Burnout Paradise, the latest in the series, represents a relatively radical departure from the traditional *Burnout* gameplay moving the game from constricted road-based courses to open world design in which players are granted more control. *Burnout Paradise* also represents the most comprehensive embracing of network technology not just for multiplayer interaction but also for the maintenance of a strong online *Burnout* community and the dissemination of substantial new content and gameplay updates by Criterion.

The Criterion-developed *Burnout* games have consistently been well received by the games media and Criterion remains one of the most respected studios in the market. *Burnout* itself remains a key driving franchise for EA sitting surprisingly successfully along side its other major racing franchise, *Need For Speed*, a series that had increasingly begun to mimic *Burnout* for gameplay features and game style. Criterion's *Burnout* team remains focused on evolving *Burnout Paradise* having announced two major new updates due in the second half of 2008 as well as the PC version.

COMPANY INCEPTION AND GROWTH

Criterion Software, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Canon Inc., was formed in 1993 by David Lau-Kee, who had previously founded and headed up Canon's European research division. It was established to continue the research and development of graphics rendering technology begun a few years earlier and which was originally designed to take advantage of Canon's computer and imaging hardware. Criterion began to move into games shortly afterwards and began to re-focus its RenderWare software towards 3D and games rendering but met with limited success.

Criterion would undoubtedly have failed if it had not been for the patience and deep pockets of its parent company. The company decided to complement its struggling middleware business in 1996 with the establishment of a full games development studio in an attempt to diversify its revenue streams and gain a more detailed understanding of the challenges of games development. However, its first three forays into full games development, despite steadily improving critical and commercial reception, failed to propel the studio into profit.

The turning point for Criterion came in 2000 with the release of RenderWare 3, a complete middleware solution catering to, amongst other games platforms, the recently released PS2 console. At that time, many developers were struggling to manage the technology leap from PlayStation to its considerably more complex successor, and a technology solution to solve some development issues found an immediate market. RenderWare 3 obviated the need for extensive technology development by providing a ready-made engine around which, in theory, almost any style of game could be built. Developed in parallel to this was *Burnout*, Criterion's fourth internally-produced game.

With Canon's balance sheet to support it, and with extensive reliance on the RenderWare 3 technology, Criterion was able to self-finance the development of *Burnout* and managed to retain the full brand as well as technology IPR when it sold the publishing rights to Acclaim. The game's success in Europe, in particular, gave rise to a sequel which was also signed to Acclaim on improved terms and developed in just eight months, a potent advertisement for RenderWare.

Despite combined sales of 2m units, the *Burnout* titles, however, had not fared well in the USA. This was compounded by the fact that Acclaim was experiencing a restricted financial position and it simply lacked the financial muscle to provide proper marketing and sales support in its home territory.

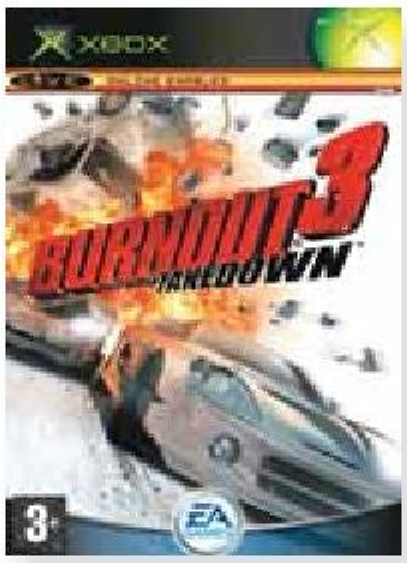
Around the same time, Criterion had begun to receive approaches from EA, interested in both its middleware as well as its games (*Burnout 3* and a new IP called *Black*). This led to Criterion jumping ship from Acclaim to sign the publishing rights to both IPs to Electronic Arts. As the value and quality of the IP quickly became clear, later in the same year EA completed an outright acquisition from Canon of Criterion's games and middleware businesses for $68m in cash plus the assumption of Canon debt.

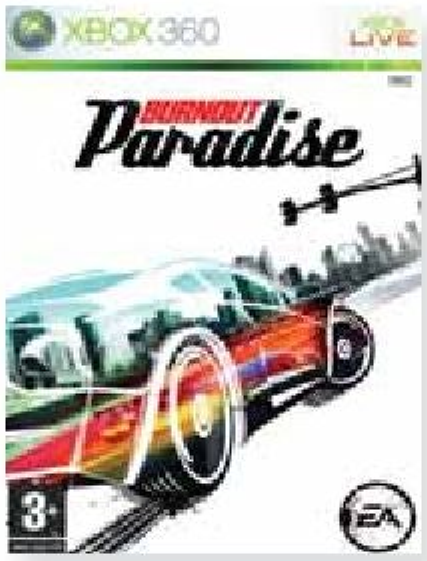
ANALYSIS

Although Electronic Arts' acquisition of Criterion brought in both games IP, development teams and market-leading middleware technology, it could be argued that Electronic Arts' decision to acquire Criterion Software was based more on the potential of the *Black* game, then in early-stage development, and the desire to bring the well-known and already successful *Burnout* IP in-house than to acquire the RenderWare technology and staff. By the time of its acquisition, Criterion was comfortably the middleware market leader. The market's reasonable expectation was that Renderware would dominate the PS3/360 cycle too. However, the RenderWare licensing business quickly (and unsurprisingly) died after the acquisition as third parties decided against relying on their largest rival for a core part of their development. Plus, EA reduced third party support for the technology. Although the middleware division was intended to form the heart of EA's next-gen technology development, EA scaled back this ambition and even went on to licence other third party middleware (such as Epic's Unreal Engine 3). The RenderWare division is now part of a global EA Technology division with its main centres in Vancouver and Guildford.

> ***"The value to EA of the acquisition of Criterion was as much its market-spoiling effect as its utility as a technology platform…"***

The value to EA of the acquisition of Criterion's middleware business was therefore as much its market-spoiling effect (it forced many of its rivals to find alternative tech) as its utility as an technology platform, both of which





are difficult to measure but likely to be limited compared to the value gained from the acquisition of Criterion's games development business and its accompanying IP. Electronic Arts has only recently formally revealed sales figures for the *Burnout* franchise although we estimate that *Burnout 3*, *Burnout Legends* and *Burnout Revenge* have together accrued over 6m unit sales whilst Black went on to achieve over 2m unit sales. This would have represented over $200m in very profitable (given Criterion Games' relatively low development costs) revenues for Electronic Arts in the two years following the acquisition of Criterion. Electronic Arts had already seen the potential of the *Burnout* series with 2 million units recorded by their poorly performing and financially hamstrung publishing rivals Acclaim Entertainment and would have been very confident of considerably greater sales success for the franchise. As such, Criterion's acquisition is a typical example of an acquisition driven by successful triple-A IP.

The *Burnout* franchise succeeded because of a combination of reasonably novel and high quality games design and the support of its two owners, Canon and Electronic Arts. For many years Criterion, as a subsidiary of Canon, was a heavily loss-making division that relied entirely on the financial support of its parent. This was critical also for both the subsidisation of the company's games development business (for whom the creation of a hit product was just one of a number of business goals) as well as its ability to retain its games IPR when securing a publisher. Electronic Arts, on the other hand, provided the platform from which the *Burnout* franchise was able to expand its appeal and substantially increase its sales.

CONCLUSIONS

- The original game had a short learning curve, instant gameplay gratification and mass-market design appeal
- It offered the novelty of aggressive driving gameplay features but also the use of roads populated with non-participating (but fully interactive) traffic
- Quality of cinematic visual style for replays and use of blurring to add to sensation of speed
- Distribution, marketing and sales might of EA backed *Burnout 3* and subsequent releases
- Use of RenderWare middleware allowed developers to focus on design and gameplay enhancements (rather than technology development) for the first *Burnout* titles

Games Investor Consulting is a specialist games industry consultancy founded in 2003 to provide independent games research and corporate finance consulting to the games industry and financial community. Headed by Rick Gibson and Nick Gibson, GIC is one of the industry's most trusted sources for market intelligence, has generated a number of industry-standard reports, and has consulted on games strategy and research for numerous games and media companies as well as trade and governmental bodies.

THE DEALS

GAMESHASTRA
SCEE has signed up Indian developer Gameshastra to make a game specifically for the Indian market. It will feature traditional Indian sports which the studio says have 'a rustic appeal to them'. "We feel the market has reached a level where a new concept like this can be tried," said Jim Ryan, COO of SCEE.
www.gameshastra.com

SPLATTERHOUSE
BottleRocket has chosen to use Gamebryo for several upcoming titles, including the remake of classic property *Splatterhouse*. The San Diego-based studio picked Emergent's engine due to its easily-extendible architecture and the ability to quickly prototype and deploy them across multiple platforms.
www.bottlerocket.com

CARTOONS IN FREEFALL
Grigon Entertainment has utilised the Unity engine to make Cartoon Network's first ever MMO. *Cartoon Network Universe: FreeFall* puts players in the midst of an alien invasion of the Cartoon Network world, letting them team up with each other and with classic CN characters to defend the land.
www.cartoonnetwork.com

POPQUAP
The DS version of the *Peggle*, PopCap's pachinko-cum-pinball game, is being put together in association with Japanese firm Q Entertainment, the studio founded by *Sega Rally* designer Tetsuya Mizuguchi. Q will design new levels for the game, anticipated to hit retail by the end of the year.
www.popcap.com

WARNING: DEADLINE
Warner Bros Interactive has signed up Denmark-based Deadline games to make an two episodic games based on the critically-acclaimed *Watchmen* graphic novel. The first will be released alongside the film next year, and the second will be timed for the DVD release.
www.deadline.dk

UNIVERSAL GRINNING
More licence news: Swedish developer Grin has been signed by Universal to make a game sequel to hit movie *Wanted*. Fellow Hollywooders Warner will distribute.
www.grin.se

DEVELOPER CHART

(MAY 25th – JUNE 28th)

1

↑

LAST MONTH 2

NINTENDO

BEST SELLING GAME:
WII PLAY

GTA IV may be enough to displace Nintendo, but only temporarily: here is a boat unpeterbed by the highs and lows of the stormy sea. Those surprised by *Wii Play* being the most popular of the Japanese giant's games need only repeat the sacred mantra: free Wiimote, free Wiimote, free Wiimote.

Wii

2

↑

LAST MONTH 21

TRAVELLER'S TALES

BEST SELLING GAME:
LEGO INDIANA JONES: ORIGINAL ADVENTURES

Given the tabloids' reactions to Formula 1 honcho Max Mosley's alleged orgies, you might think that whipping Nazis was low on the list of Joe Public's likes – but then this comes along and proves otherwise. Take our advice, Max: it's only acceptible when you're in tombs. Now there's an idea…

WII, PS2, DS, XB360, PS3, PSP, PC

3

↑

LAST MONTH 4

KONAMI

BEST SELLING GAME:
METAL GEAR SOLID 4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS

Looks like suicidal old men just don't gel with the public as much as we predicted they would, with Konami's biggest release of the year only enough to help it hobble up one place. We'd much rather it was that incessant Xbox 360 port rumour that'd shove a gun in its mouth, though.

PS3

4

↓

LAST MONTH 1

ROCKSTAR NORTH

BEST SELLING GAME:
GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

"I'm Neeko Belliiik!" we say. "No, aii am Neeeko Belliick!" they say. If Rockstar North has nothing else to be proud of, it can take solace in the fact that never before has a game inspired such passioned Eastern European impressions between gamers.

XB360, PS3

5

↑

LAST MONTH 90

CODEMASTERS

BEST SELLING GAME:
RACE DRIVER: GRID

Cars: not exactly rubbish without guns, just not nearly reaching their potential. Thousands would disagree, though, given Codemaster's stellar rise up the charts this month. But just remember: the more guns on cars, the more chance of Jeremy Clarkson having a freak accident.

XB360, PS3, PC

OUR MONTHLY RANKING OF THE WORLD'S STUDIOS BASED ON UK GAMES SALES

CHART KEY	
NEW NEW ENTRY	↑ UP
▨ INDEPENDENT	↓ DOWN
	→ ← NO MOVE

6	↓	LAST MONTH 3	**SEGA** MARIO & SONIC AT THE OLYMPIC GAMES	Wii, DS	🇯🇵
7	NEW	LAST MONTH -	**SORA LTD** SUPER SMASH BROS: BRAWL	Wii	🇯🇵
8	↓	LAST MONTH 7	**EA CANADA** FIFA 08	PS2, XB360, PS3, PSP, WII, DS, PC	🇨🇦
9	NEW	LAST MONTH -	**DIGITAL ILLUSIONS** BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY	XB360, PS3	🇸🇪
10	↓	LAST MONTH 5	**INFINITY WARD** CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN WARFARE	XB360, PS3, PC, DS	🇺🇸
11	↓	LAST MONTH 6	**UBISOFT (MONTREAL)** TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX: VEGAS 2	XB360, PS3, PC	🇨🇦
12	↑	LAST MONTH 15	**NEVERSOFT** GUITAR HERO III: LEGENDS OF ROCK	Wii, PS3, XB360	🇺🇸
13	NEW	LAST MONTH -	**TEAM NINJA** NINJA GAIDEN II	XB360	🇯🇵
14	↓	LAST MONTH 8	**A2M** IRON MAN: THE OFFICIAL VIDEOGAME	PSP, PS2, WII, DS, PC	🇨🇦
15	↓	LAST MONTH 11	**HARMONIX** ROCK BAND	XB360	🇺🇸
16	↑	LAST MONTH 39	**HUDSON** SPORTS ISLAND	Wii	🇯🇵
17	↓	LAST MONTH 12	**FREE RADICAL DESIGN** HAZE	PS3	🇬🇧
18	NEW	LAST MONTH -	**FIRAXIS** SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION REVOLUTION	XB360, PS3	🇺🇸
19	↓	LAST MONTH 9	**MAXIS** THE SIMS 2: KITCHEN & BATH DESIGN STUFF	PC	🇺🇸
20	NEW	LAST MONTH -	**PAM DEVELOPMENT** TOP SPIN 3	PS3, WII, XB360	🇫🇷

Chart Comment

While the top spot might have reverted back to its pre-*GTA IV* holder, there's a surprising amount of movement in the charts, especially from smaller studios.

Warner-owned Traveller's Tales predictably fares well from releasing its *Lego Indiana Jones* game concurrently with the film, cashing in on the hype surrounding everyone's favourite withering archaeologist. It certainly doesn't hurt that the wide appeal of TT's *Lego* series makes the game appeal beyond the usual movie tie-in buying audience, either.

Also riding high in the charts, and jumping a whopping 85 places, is Codemasters, thanks to the commercial and critical success of *Race Driver: GRID*.

It's also a good month for new entries into the charts, with a whopping five fresh-faced studios enjoying their moment in the (UK) sun. Japanese independent Sora, whose first game – the massive *Super Smash Bros. Brawl* – has been extensively promoted by Nintendo, gets this month's Highest New Entry gong as it punches its way to seventh place.

> *"There's a lot of movement among smaller studios..."*

EA DICE has been a *Bad Company* this month, but nevertheless has done well to come in at number nine, while Tomonobu Itagaki's resignation from Tecmo wasn't enough to dent enthusiasm for gory hack'n'slashing, with Team Ninja's *Ninja Gaiden 2* sneaking into 13th position. And let's not forget Firaxis, Hudson and Pam Development, all of which enter (or, in Hudson's case, re-enter) the top 20 this month.

Ed Fear
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FREE FOR ALL

While some are quick to criticise courses and universities teaching games as development 'irrelevant' or 'out of touch', one part of the industry is looking to change that: technology providers. Here **Michael French** runs through five of the major academic programs which offer free or cheap access to well-known tools and apps…

MICROSOFT

Microsoft has several programmes in place designed to get software into the hands of students and academics for free, the firm's academic developer evangelist Ed Dunhill tells us.

MSDNAA is a subscription available to technical departments at schools, colleges and universities which provides a number of Microsoft apps from Vista and Server through to developer tools. Most institutions already take part, but those also looking to sign up can register at https://registermsdn.one.microsoft.com/msdnaa/aa/newstep1.aspx or email edunhill@microsoft.com.

Dreamspark, meanwhile, is a year old project for Higher Education students to get access to MS apps for free. Head to dreamspark.com for more info – all students need to do is verify their student status. The likes of Server 2003, Expression Studio, SQL Server, Visual Studio Pro 2008 – and, yep, XNA Game Studio – are all available at no cost.

MSDNAA and Dreamspark also offer free subscriptions to the XNA Creators Club for those looking to further explot the .NET XNA platform.

Dunhill adds that Microsoft also has an offer for free Windows Server based web hosting for Higher Education students. More details can be found at his blog – blogs.msdn.com/edunhill.

LUXOLOGY

3D modelling package Modo vendor Luxology is a newbie to the education sector, having only just announced its plans last month, but is taking the move very seriously. "Luxology is trying to make Modo very accessible to schools and students alike. We want to break 3D out of the classroom and make it easy to use Modo not just in a lab but also on a laptop that might be anywhere. Modo runs on Macs and PCs, which provides for more flexibility," explains Immanuel Martin, sales director at Luxology.

Elements of Luxology's Education Provider Program include: reduced pricing of Modo for faculty members and labs, including floating licenses and blanket site licences; automatic access to app updates; reduced price training; and technical support.

Martin describes the pricing as 'inexpensive', the program effectively reducing the seat cost of Modo to under $100.

Colleges around the world are already signed up. In the US that includes The Academy of Art, Cogswell College, Art Institute of Washington, Florida State University, Michigan State University at Ann Arbor and the Columbus School of Art and Design. Plus, the Fukuoka Design School in Japan and University in Maribor, Slovenia are recent additions to the program. If you want to join them, send an email to sales@luxology.com.

> ***"We want to empower the games developers of tomorrow…"***

EMERGENT

Emergent only formally started working with universities a year ago, although it had relationships with some colleges prior to the July '07 founding of its academic program. Key to the offer is the fact that it provides universities with completely free use of its Gamebryo engine, asking only that institutions provide feedback on what projects the middleware was used for.

"We want to empower the games developers of tomorrow and what better way to do that than provide them with a triple-A game engine and tools so they can use 'real world' technology," a rep told Develop. "In addition to the free use of our engine we provide technical support to the professors and their students. We hold technical seminars where we train the teachers how to better use Gamebyo and share ideas on how to incorporate it into their classes. We're also working on training/classroom documents that should be out this year for professors to use in the classroom."

20 schools across North America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand are part of the program including University of Derby, University of Ulster, University of Central Florida, and North Carolina State University. To sign up head to www.emergent.net/programs/academic.

SOFTIMAGE

Relaunched last year, Softimage's Education Program now consists of two parts – the Education Partner Program, which offers partnership opportunities for education and training facilities, and the Certified Instructor Program, which offers professionals interested in teaching Softimage the chance to become certified. "We launched our new Softimage Education Program last year, in 2007, after an extensive survey and evaluation with many industry educators, and overhauled our Education Program to make it easier to approach, much more compelling and attractive to educators who wish to teach XSI in their classes, and helpful to students and graduates after they complete their XSI training," a company rep told Develop.

In terms of costs, eligible students, teachers and institutions can purchase permanent or one year subscription licences of XSI Advanced Academic Edition for $295 and $175 respectively.

Art schools already teaching XSI include NAD Center (National Animation and Design Center) in Montreal, Fashion Institute of Technology (NY), Flashpoint Academy (Chicago), Vancouver Film School (Vancouver, B.C.), University of Southern California (LA), Filmakademie Baden Wuerttenburg (Germany), ESCAPE Studios (UK), Daikin Industries (Japan) and Whistling Woods School (Mumbai, India).

Find out how to sign up at: softimage.com/education/default.aspx

AUTODESK

Last, but not least is Autodesk's long-running education tools scheme which has seen its Max and Maya tools sold into Universities for a number of years.

Perhaps most alluring to educators will be Autodesk's supplied summary of the cost reductions: "Academic partners can choose from a variety of software solutions, at deep discounts off of suggested list (from 70 to 95 per cent off list price), and gain access to additional resources including technical support, self-paced learning solutions, curriculum development tools, professional programs, online product training and more. Students can also take advantage of deep discounts and access the same software that the professional use in their daily work lives."

UK universities signed up include Portsmouth, Coventry, Bournemouth, and Teeside. And colleges the world over are part of the program.

Elsewhere, the Autodesk program is well structured to include all aspects of teaching use of its software. It offers an EDU portal for students at students.autodesk.com and also runs the EDU Strategic Partner program which looks to help support the explosion of CG animation and game development courses around the world by helping big companies like Sony Imageworks, EA, Ubisoft and Lucas Film interface with colleges. The firm's Autodesk Professional Excellence program meanwhile looks to certify educators and support the careers of those looking to teach how to use Autodesk products.

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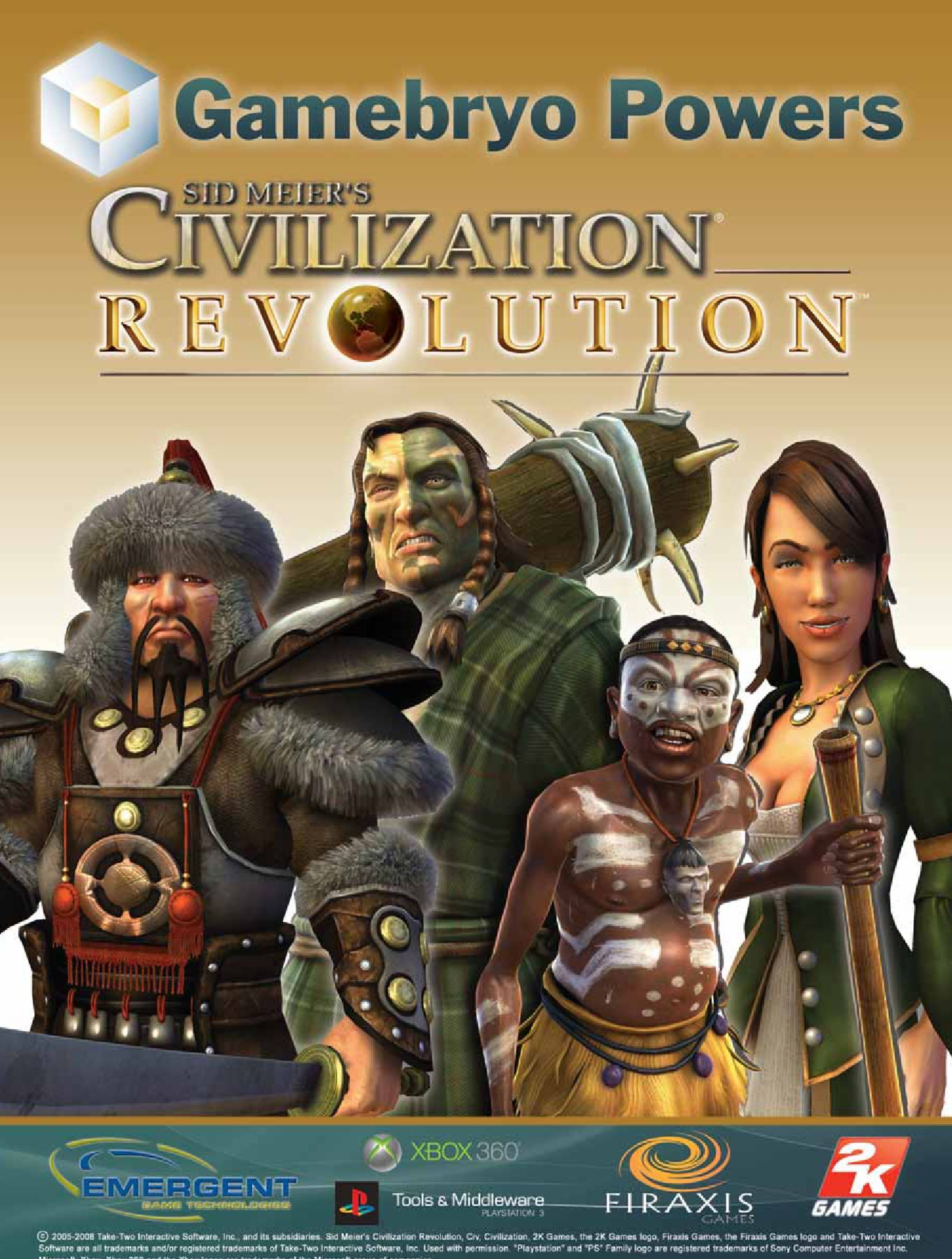
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BETA

DEVELOPMENT FEATURES, INTERVIEWS, ESSAYS & MORE

> **"We are only scratching the surface of what is possible in this medium..."**
> **Sam Houser, Rockstar Games, p30**

Develop Awards Special

Q&A: Sam Houser, president of Grand Prix winner Rockstar, p28
PROFILE: Best Independent Splash Damage, p32
REPORT: Pictures and highlights from the Awards, p37

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GRAND THEFT AUTEUR

As co-founder and president of Rockstar Games, Sam Houser is – along with brother and creative VP Dan – the guiding light for a set of studios which have unquestionably had a huge impact on the games industry. In this rare interview, he speaks with **Michael French** to look back at the company's first ten years of industry-changing games development…

GTA IV tells the story of two relatives who travel to America to make their fortune. Was the hint of autobiography in writing the story intentional? (And if so, which one of you is Roman and which is Nico?)
A lot of people have asked that question! No - it was not intentional or conscious, although I suppose any migrant can relate to their story in some ways, and migration is a very contemporary theme. They are only cousins, not brothers, and we like to play around with family relationships in the games as much as possible as they instantly provide complexity and depth to relations that everyone can relate to. In a game like *GTA* in which the protagonist meets so many new people, you need some people to feel anchored to.

As for who is the bumbling trouble maker and who is the war weary psychopath, isn't it obvious?

The Rockstar business is famed for being built on the same principles as a record label. What qualities from the music industry have you tried to capture with Rockstar? Do you think you've succeeded?
Rockstar was built with the idea of consistency and quality that the best record labels embody, in which you associate a label with a quality and style. We understood early on what our

goals were, whatever the product we were working on. A combination of accessible but innovative gameplay and high production values, with gameplay mechanics and settings we found appealing and unique. In this way, I think we have at least stuck close to what we set out to do. If we succeeded, well, that depends if people like the games or not.

In what ways has the business side of Rockstar remained different from a music label?

As an environment, all creative industries are unique, but games bear a somewhat closer resemblance to a combination of movie production and book publishing, I guess, but it is a mercifully unique environment. The team is the most important unit in game development and the size and diversity of personality types and skill sets is something unique to games and something we cherish at Rockstar.

Rockstar has expanded by about one studio every year in the last decade. Has there been a specific strategy for the way you've grown the Rockstar business?

No – this was pretty random, to be honest! When we found kindred spirits, or people we hoped could become kindred spirits, we tried to bring them into the family.

How will it grow further?

We don't want to get too much bigger in terms of teams, because the games need to have the personal touch and production values that are in them, and we can't do that at a much bigger scale, but we will always look to work closely with excellent people when we come across them.

> ***"We don't want to get too much bigger in terms of teams, because the games need to have the personal touch and we can't do that at a much bigger scale…"***

In a management sense, how has the working relationship between you and Dan developed as Rockstar has grown? Has being brothers in charge of the business, working together, helped you?

We worked pretty closely together from the moment Dan left university without a clue as to what to do with himself in July 1996. That summer, he started temping with me and Lucien at BMG – Lucien King heads up our product development stuff in the UK – and he's hung around ever since!

The process of producing games has evolved so enormously since 1996 that of course what we do has changed, but the fundamentals are still the same; help the production and help improve the game while getting it done on time. Dan tends to work in a more hands on way early in a production and me more closely

HIS-STORY

Here, Houser recounts the highlights from his working life and Rockstar's history so far…

1971: Born in London.
1989: Left school in London with bad A-level results.
1990: Re-did A-levels. Better results.
1990: Began summer job sorting mail at BMG Records in London.
1991: Started degree at London university.
1991-94: Worked part time at BMG on pop videos and VHS releases.
1994: Graduated from university and transferred within BMG to its interactive division.
1996: Became head of development for BMG Interactive.
1997: Released *Grand Theft Auto* on PC and PlayStation.
March 1998: As had been clear for a while, BMG got cold feet on the interactive division (they had lost money, due to the wisdom of doing things like opening offices in about 27 countries – including Ecuador). BMG Interactive was sold for $9 million to Take Two, a small distributor with a small publishing division in Europe and next to none in the US. Along with the people, desks and office leases, the deal also includes rights to BMGI's games, including *GTA*.
July 1998: Move to New York as head of development for Take Two, with responsibility for starting a publishing business in the US.
September 1998: *GTA* released in the US.
October 1998: Released *Space Station Silicon Valley* on N64 – made by the team who would go on to make *GTA III*.
December 1998: Founded Rockstar Games – a high-end publishing division of Take Two, with stated goals to focus on progressive gameplay and high production values, as the company believed that games would come to compete with movies. Got laughed at a lot!
April 1999: First Rockstar release, *GTA London 1969*. Reaches number one in the UK.
September 1999: Take Two buys DMA Design from Infogrames (which had bought it off Gremlin or someone else, now defunct).
October 1999: *GTA 2* comes out – the first Take Two game to ship a million units at launch.
October 2000: Rockstar has two games ready at the launch of PS2 – *Midnight Club* and *Smuggler's Run*. *Midnight Club* goes on to become the most successful of the PS2's launch title line-up.
October 2001: *GTA III* comes out. Becomes biggest PS2 game of all time.
October 2002: *GTA: Vice City* comes out. Becomes biggest PS2 game of all time.
October 2003: *Manhunt* released. Proves popular with the *Daily Mail*.
October 2004: *GTA: San Andreas* comes out. Becomes biggest PS2 game of all time.
April 2005: PSP launches – *Midnight Club 3* becomes most successful launch title on system.
July 2005: Residue code found in *San Andreas*. Hackers modify it and it turns into scandal known as 'Hot Coffee'. Get dragged into legal nightmare, ending in trip to Washington in February 2006 to sit in front of federal trade commission staff – for nine hours.
October 2005: *GTA: Liberty City Stories* comes out – becomes biggest selling game on PSP.
April 2006: Release *Rockstar Games Presents Table Tennis* – first next-gen game, showcasing new Rage engine.
October 2006: *Bully* released. Proves popular with the *Daily Mail*.
June 2007: *Manhunt 2* refused certification by BBFC.
April 2008: *GTA IV* released.

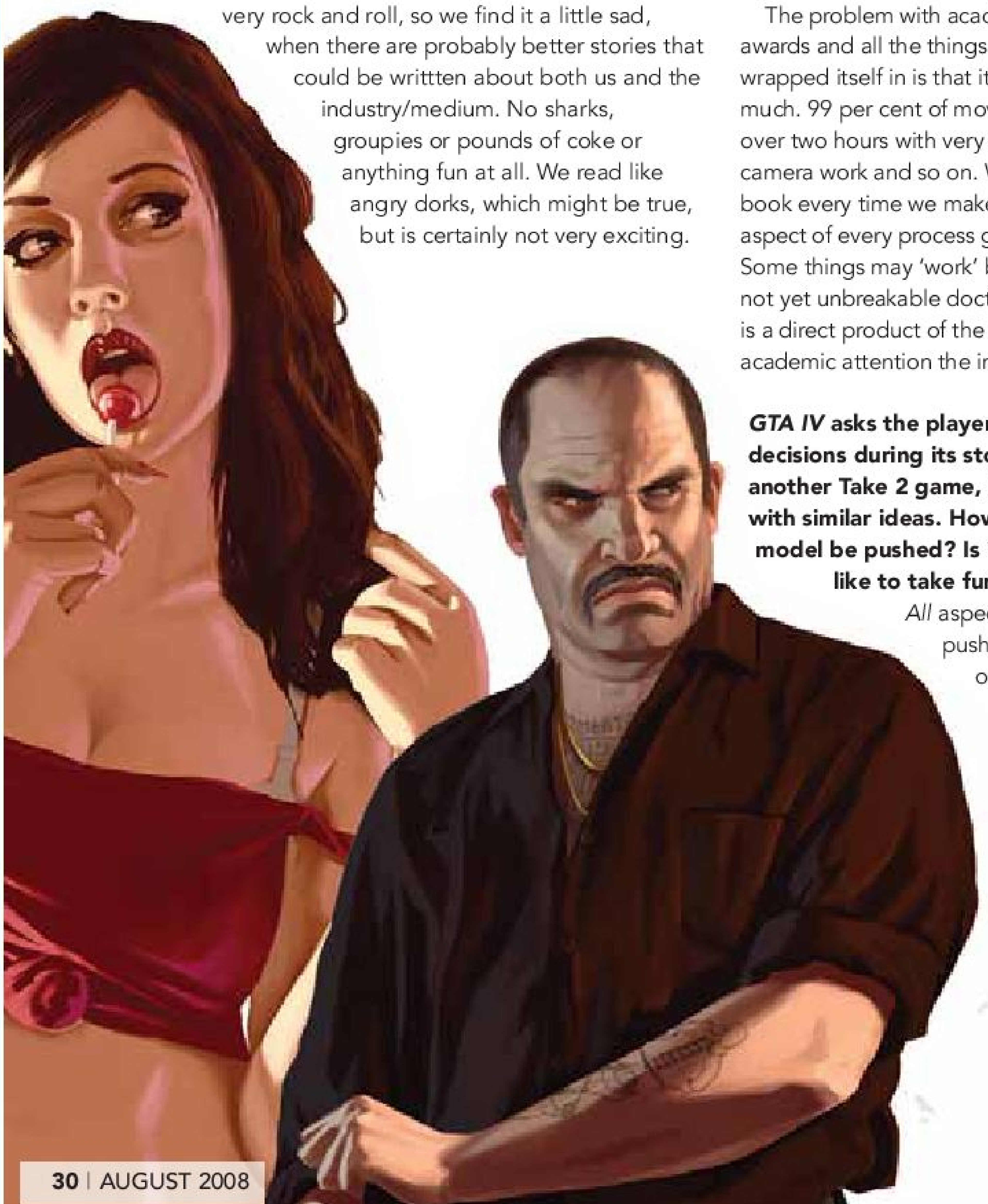
Other games Rockstar is very proud of, released along the way: *The Warriors* (2005), *Red Dead Revolver*, (2004), *Max Payne 1* and *2* (2001, 2003), *GTA: Vice City Stories* (2006), *Midnight Club 2, 3* and *Dub Edition* (2003, 2005, 2006), *Smuggler's Run 2* (2001).

later on, but it's very inter-changeable. Of course, being brothers helps, particularly in the exotic world of American corporate life to which we are occasionally exposed as we are, obviously, very loyal and very straight with one another.

How much of what gets written about Rockstar in the likes of the tabloid press do you read?
I think we probably read most of it – if you turn on a computer this stuff reaches you, usually forwarded by an old friend laughing at you.

> ***"Most of the people that hate us are people it is a truly an honor to be hated by – reactionary creeps with strange agendas, and the Daily Mail…"***

Do you pay any attention to it?
No – I think we are both depressed at how boring we really are and how unexciting even the worse fabrications and exaggerations are when you read about them. None of it seems very rock and roll, so we find it a little sad, when there are probably better stories that could be writtten about both us and the industry/medium. No sharks, groupies or pounds of coke or anything fun at all. We read like angry dorks, which might be true, but is certainly not very exciting.



But still, Rockstar has become an easy target for the press. Does it concern you that the negative and misleading coverage can overshadow the innovations and positive contribution *GTA* has made back to the videogaming business and medium?
Not really. Most of the people who hate us are people it is truly an honor to be hated by – reactionary creeps with strange agendas – and the Daily Mail. Most people who know about modern pop culture know about *GTA* and like or dislike it on its own merits.

Rockstar committed to episodic content for *GTA* before *GTA IV* was finished; how did that impact the way you write and plan for the first *GTA IV* game?
You'll see in a few months.

Given all the work that goes into the narrative and writing and acting in a game like *GTA IV*, as well as the technology, does it frustrate you that games as a medium are still less recognised than film?
It used to but now, when games are clearly more vibrant and exciting than movies to anyone who is paying the slightest bit of attention (most of the critics and detractors don't even play or look at the games), it actually excites us that they are being ignored as it gives us what we most cherish about this industry: the freedom to be innovative and develop in a less constrictive environment.

The problem with academia and prizes and awards and all the things the movie industry has wrapped itself in is that it constrains things too much. 99 per cent of movies are three acts told over two hours with very similar plot structures, camera work and so on. We can rip up the rule book every time we make a game as every aspect of every process gets reconsidered. Some things may 'work' but they are, mercifully, not yet unbreakable doctrine. And that freedom is a direct product of the lack of mass critical and academic attention the industry receives.

***GTA IV* asks the players to make a few key decisions during its story, and we've seen another Take 2 game, *BioShock*, experiment with similar ideas. How further can that model be pushed? Is it something you'd like to take further in future games?**
All aspects of games can be pushed a lot further. We are only scratching the surface of what is possible in this medium. Of all things, storytelling is one of the areas that in some ways has the furthest to go. Using choices like that is something more or less unique to games, but the art is in combining a strong, cinematic narrative with choices, so players get the best of both models – the best story that feels like it is evolving around them as they play based on their decisions. Of course, we will continue to experiment with it, as we never get anything right first time.

Between the launches of *San Andreas* and *GTA IV* there had been a fairly significant growth in the games industry, especially when it comes to what people call 'new player demographics', or casual games, but really means just more people – and more 'average' people who aren't that used to games – playing with and owning consoles. Was that something you took into account as you oversaw *GTA IV*?
Not really. We always tried to make games that anyone could pick up and play. They may, over time, reveal a lot of structural and mechanical complexity, but the first mission of more or less any Rockstar game is very easy and engaging for a reason – because new people playing the game have to be gently led into the world of 3D action games, or open world racing games or whatever. This is the way we try to cater for a mass market – but we are focused on making digital worlds that are fun to explore and interlaced with rich narratives, that even the most casual player can become a part of, if they want to. The challenge is to make a game in which 'depth' does not result in complexity the first minutes you play. This is a challenge we've always tried to embrace, and I hope we are getting better at it, just as I hope we are getting better at everything.

Does the success of *GTA IV* goes to show that you don't need to make games for 'casual' audiences in order to reach the mass-market?
The division doesn't make sense to us; good games will usually sell and be popular, bad games will struggle – of any type or genre or style. But we still believe big, high impact games will help the industry evolve and further surpass the movie industry as the next mass-market story telling medium.

Although Rockstar is famed for games enjoyed and designed for mature players, would you want to make games for this more casual audience that now exists?
In order to be successful, we are going to have to continue to do what we have always done – make games that we would want to play, and hope there is audience for them. We don't believe in focus testing ideas (it's like asking an audience what album they want to hear – they don't know until they hear it!) or thinking of a target market or anything like that; it's an anathema to creativity. We are trying to make commercially viable art, not sell washing powder. While people like what we do, we will continue to do it to the best of our abilities. When they don't, we will have to stop and do something else.
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Splash Damage with their award. From left to right: Stephen Gaffney, Richard Jolly, Paul Wedgwood and Arnout van Meer.

MAKING A SPLASH

You'd be forgiven for not knowing much about indie developer Splash Damage – but with a Develop Award for Best Independent Studio under its belt, the Bromley bunch are ready to emerge into the light. **Ed Fear** speaks with founder and creative director Paul Wedgwood…

Reading the instructions for getting to Splash Damage's Bromley offices, you'd be forgiven for forming preconceptions before your arrival. "The building is white and blue, and has two entrances," it reads. "One is for Bromley Conservative Club, and the second is ours – with no signage."

Given the modest setting, and relatively quiet public image of the studio, it's tempting to not know what to expect – or, perhaps more honestly, not expect that much. But, actually, those preconceptions would turn out to be completely wrong. Inside the unassuming, white and blue two-entranced building – well, above that Conservative Club, anyway – lies a studio with its head screwed on; one of the very few that has managed to make the transition from hobbyist mod team to a fully-functioning studio handling triple-A games.

But entering those offices, so different from the outside, more questions rise to the surface. How has this bunch of geographically disparate people actually managed to all get together and start their own studio when so many other dreamers fail? How do they manage to make contemporary big-budget games with only 36 people? And, perhaps most importantly, how did the *Quake Wars: Enemy Territory* developer manage to curry enough favour with American development powerhouse id Software to be granted one of its most precious licences?

> ***"We were completely awestruck that we were in the TGI Fridays that id hung out in after work…"***

MOD ROCKERS

While the Splash Damage story starts officially in 2001, in truth it's several years before that the seeds were truly planted. It all started with in January 2000 with a *Quake 3* mod, *Q3 Fortress*. Helmed by Paul Wedgwood, with art lead by Richard Jolly and Arnout van Meer as resident code genius – all three of which still hold senior positions within the company – the development of *Q3F* was similar to most mods: a bunch of gamers collaborating from across the world in their spare time.

Unlike most mods, though, *Q3F* caught the attention of id Software – a company intimately familiar with its modding scene – after the team managed to attract worldwide fansites very early on. They were invited out to QuakeCon in 2000, the annual gathering for id fans and mod makers in id's hometown of Mesquite, Texas, and given their own demonstration area. They presented their work to anyone who'd look, but most importantly to id themselves. Recalling the time, Wedgwood says: "We spent the whole time networking with other mod teams and the id guys. We went drinking with them, and were completely awestruck that we were in the TGI Fridays that id hung out in after work."

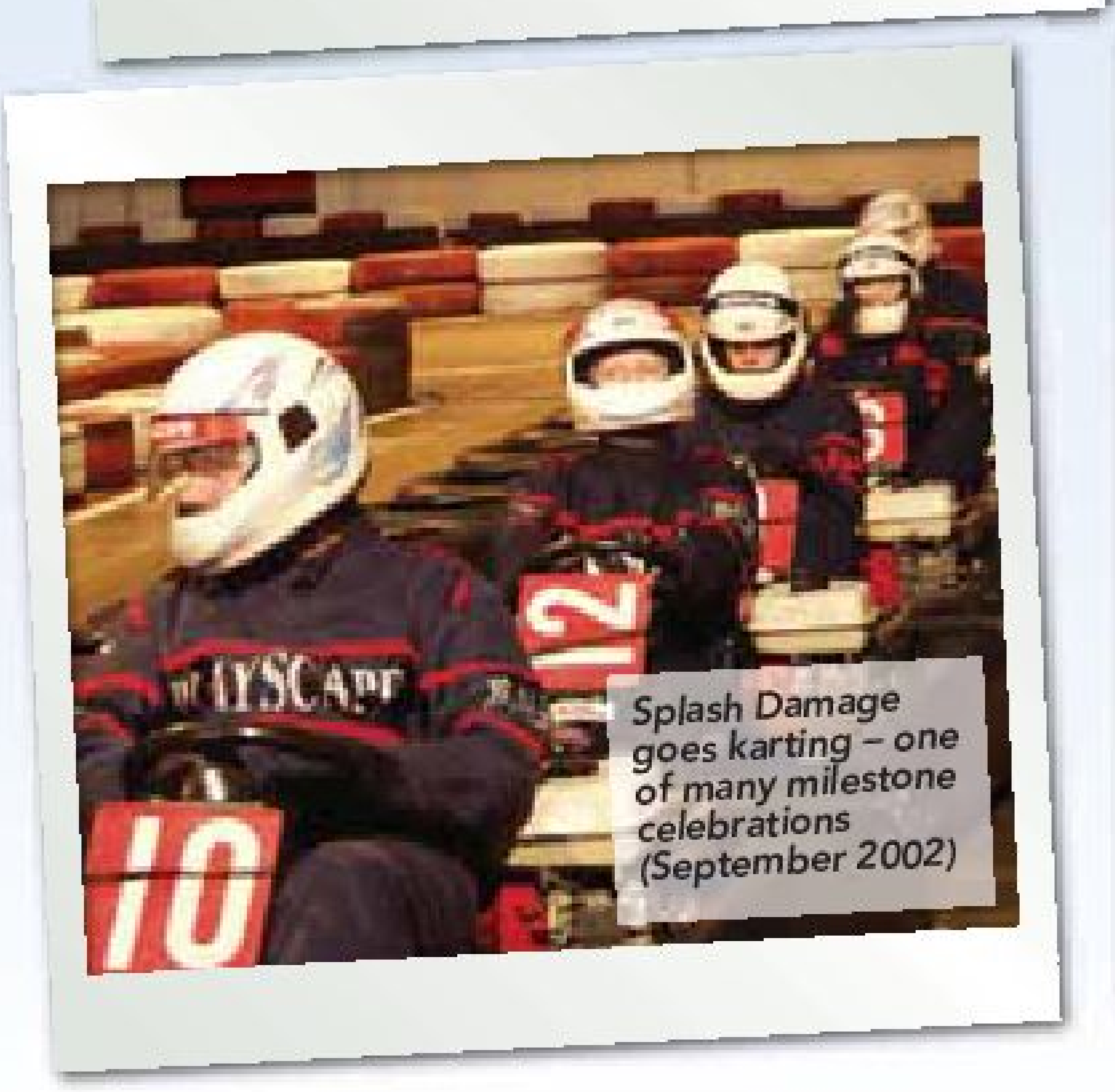
After pitching an idea that was deemed far too ambitious for such a small developer, the team returned and decided to make Q3F into a

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE SPLASH DAMAGE SCRAPBOOK

Visiting Ritual Entertainment's offices – a rare treat for a mod team (August 2001)

Ready for my close-up – Paul's first on-camera interview with the BBC (July 2002)

Practicing for Wolfenstein Enemy Territory at the Imperial War Museum (July 2002)


Splash Damage goes karting – one of many milestone celebrations (September 2002)

Whatchoo talkin' about Willis - The first company-wide E3 visit (2003)

Finally out of the garage – moving into the new offices (Feb 2004)

total conversion by replacing all the artwork, music and sound effects with completely new content. Simultaneously, in May 2001 the three leads formed Splash Damage, which started off working with Network of the World and Gamer.tv to produce a TV show based on *Quake 3 Arena*, designing maps and developing a TV-friendly HUD and dynamic camera system.

At the start of 2002, the team approached BT OpenWorld to make some maps for the multiplayer shooters popular at the time. One of these maps, Market Garden, became the most popular third-party map for *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*. During this period, Wedgwood had been introduced to id co-owner Kevin Cloud, who was impressed with what the team had done with id's engine.

"After that, I pretty much ICQ'd Kevin every day, saying 'Gimme a deal, gimme a deal, gimme a deal,'" Wedgwood laughs. "They introduced us to Activision, and in early 2002 they asked us if we'd like to make three maps for the *RTCW* Game of the Year edition."

Again, one of those maps – Tram Siege – became the most popular first-party map. As a result, id also signed Splash Damage to develop the multiplayer part of a *Wolfenstein* sequel. Sadly, development of the single-player element was cancelled but, seeing the fun that people were having with Splash Damage's component, Activision decided to continue development and release their work as a free game.

After *Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory* launched to much critical success, Splash Damage were given their first massive break when id put them in charge of all of the multiplayer maps for the massively-anticipated *Doom 3*. From there, it's just a short jump to being given stewardship of *Quake Wars*.

> **"Each time I failed at business, I learnt that I should pay attention to a certain area..."**

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

While this company history – admittedly a largely condensed one – gives an idea to how the company has grown, it says nothing of how the studio's professionalism has matured. Or actually, maybe that's why it's managed to make that rocky transition. But there are things about the way the studio is run that belie the hobbyist roots which anchor the Splash Damage tree.

For example: you may erroneously think that a studio with a rabidly enthusiastic mod-team core would be pretty lax with regards to letting details slip of its next project – a tantalisingly undisclosed multi-platform game for Bethesda – but meeting rooms were hurredly stripped of concept art before *Develop* was allowed in.

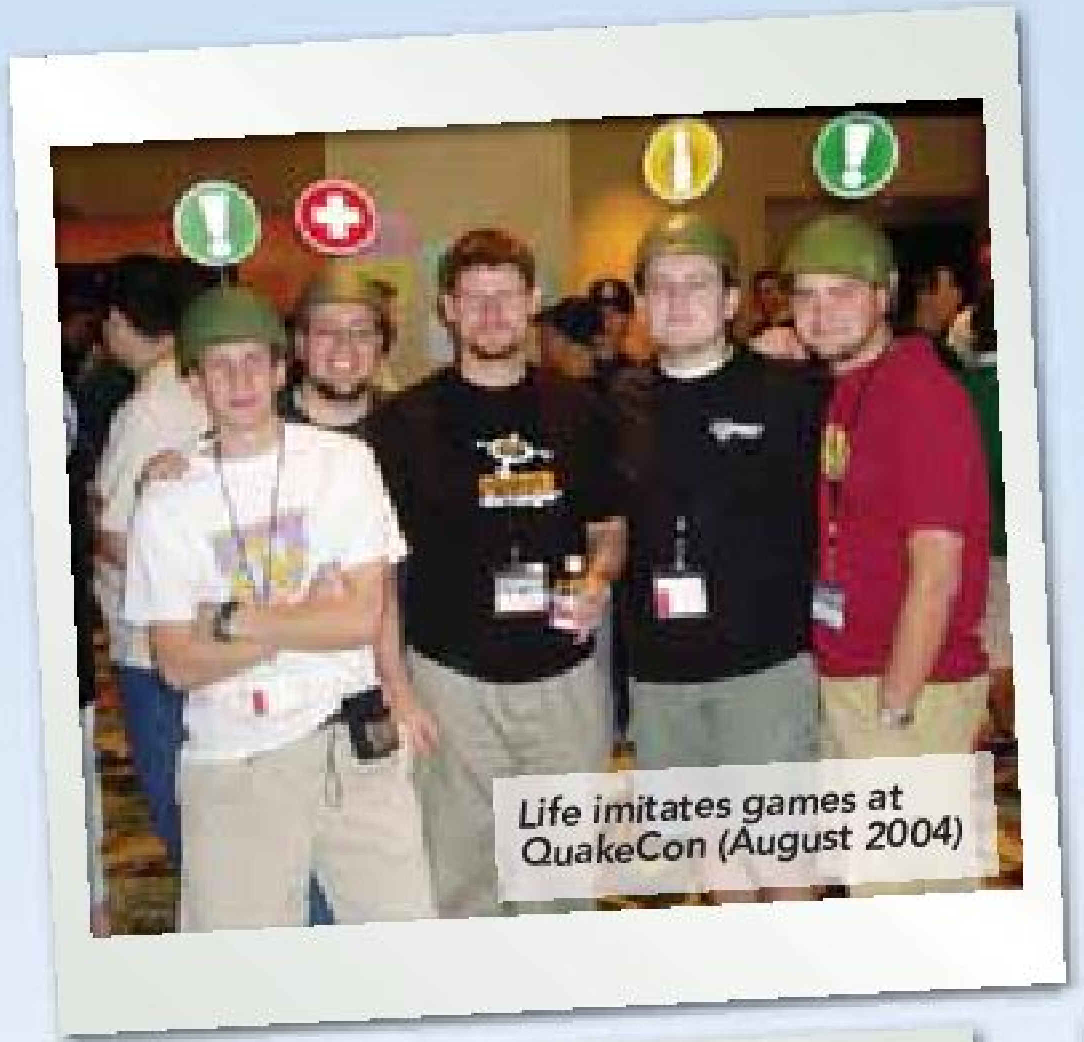
Similarly, you might think that those early years of zealous all-night coding might carry on to a studio that's firmly stuck in the old crunch model of developing games. On the contrary, not only does Splash Damage work to allieviate crunch periods to being as short as possible, it also provides all of its staff benefits that most games industry employees dream of.

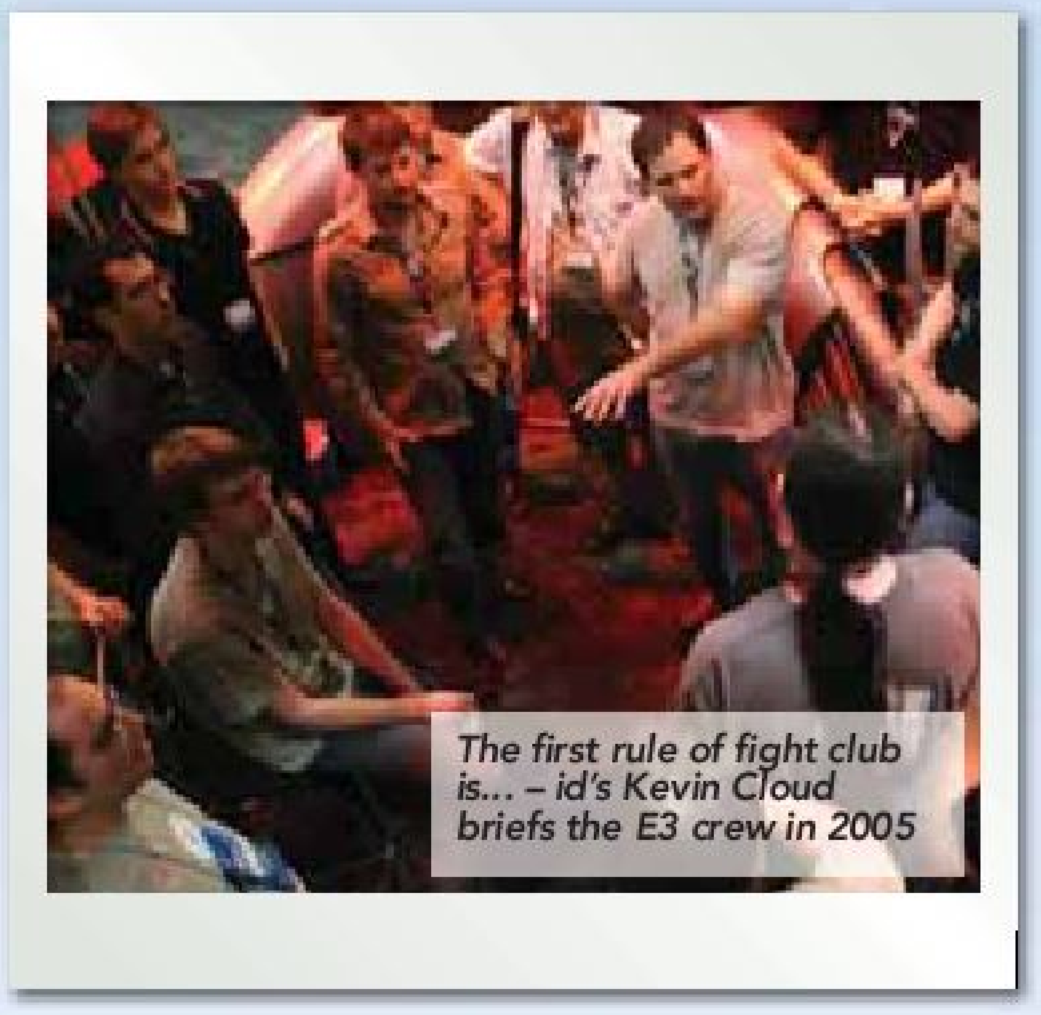
How has it managed to get its head so screwed on in such little time?

Candidly, Wedgwood admits that the success was borne from much failure. "I'd been unsuccessful in business a couple of times in the past. But each time I failed, I'd learn something about doing things above board or that I should pay attention to a certain area.

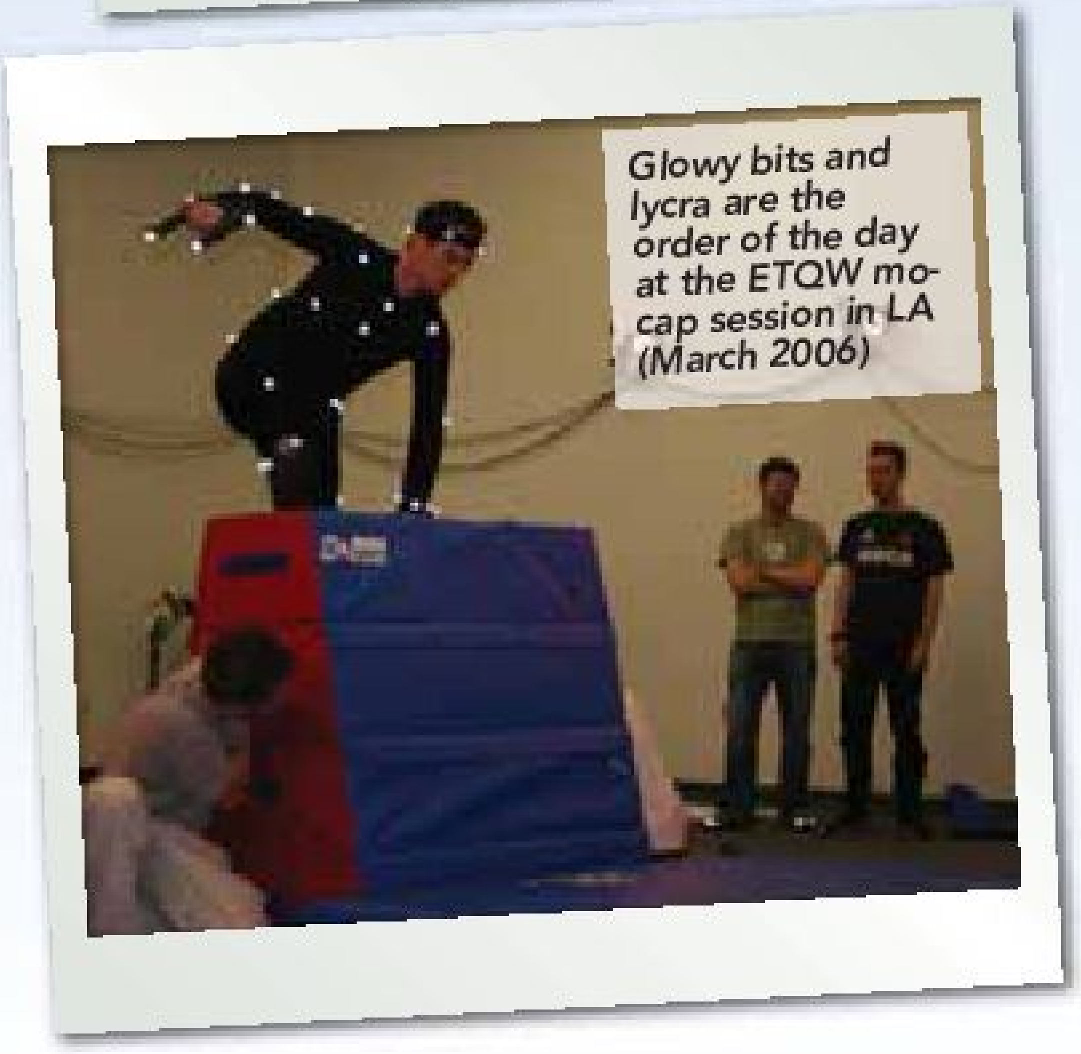
"So there I was, two or three years before I started Splash Damage, in front of the official receiver for the third time in a row, thinking I was going to get banned as a company director. The receiver said to me: 'Paul, everybody that I know in South London that's been successful in business has been to see me at least three times before they manage to get it right'. It was such an uplifting thing to say, because I was so depressed. I resolved that if I

THE SPLASH DAMAGE SCRAPBOOK (CONTINUED)

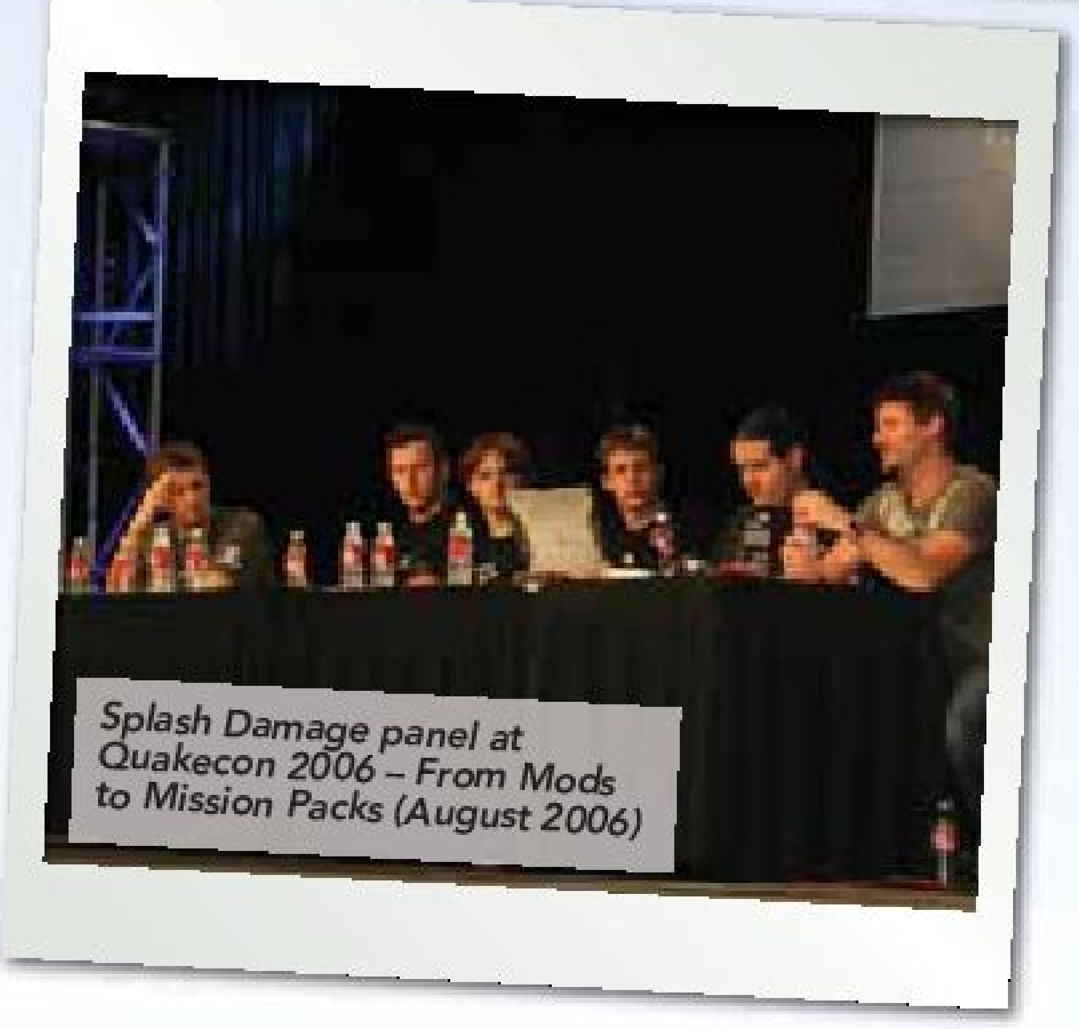

Life imitates games at QuakeCon (August 2004)


The first rule of fight club is... – id's Kevin Cloud briefs the E3 crew in 2005

Signing future eBay material at Activision's ETQW summit (January 2006)


Glowy bits and lycra are the order of the day at the ETQW mo-cap session in LA (March 2006)

Paul and Kevin Cloud from id show off ETQW at one of countless press events (May 2006)


Splash Damage panel at Quakecon 2006 – From Mods to Mission Packs (August 2006)

tried again I'd make sure everything was right from day one."

This meant getting a grant to have a management consultant from UK Trade and Industry come in and help them build a comprehensive model that was based on 'perfection in business' – as far reaching as to discuss staff retention before they even had a single employee.

"Our thinking was that, at the time – 2001 or 2002 – I think the British games industry had a reputation for being a bit…" He pauses. "Crap. They were working over launderettes, or in their bedrooms; it was quite unprofessional. There was this image that people in the games industry were society's dropouts.

"We didn't like that idea – we'd been to the US and seen companies like Ritual, Gearbox and id, and to us it seemed like the game development industry was seen as better in the US. People sat in cool chairs in cool offices surrounded by action figures – it was nothing like the UK's approach, which was more like a workhouse."

So, they sought average salary surveys and made sure that they paid at least ten per cent above the average. Staff today enjoy a stakeholder pension, private medical and dental care, and membership at a local gym.

"That's just the way we've done things, made sure that everything's been done correctly. We make sure we follow employment laws, and get staff to sign in and out – it's all just basic professional stuff that I saw when I was working for investment banks in the City, so I didn't have that unprofessional game development background."

BURNING CRUSADE

It's this focused approach on management that probably meant the *Q3F* project ever worked in the first place – dissect any of the thousands of dissolved mod teams whose concepts and early screenshots litter places like PlanetQuake and you'll see that the vast majority fall apart due to a lack of proper leadership.

> ***"In 2001 or 2002, I think that there was this image that people in the games industry were society's dropouts..."***

And, while it may seem simplistic to say so, it's Wedgewood's burning passion to own a studio that's lead to it succeeding: that desperation to make a studio work meant that the team had to jump right into commercial work, which forced them into professionalism that they wouldn't have found if they'd remained hobbyists.

And so, as Splash Damage embarks on its project for Bethesda and takes its first steps away from Activision and id – a relationship that Wedgwood acknowledges it was extremely lucky to have as a young, unproven studio – and in to the brave new world of its own creation, does Wedgwood feel any trepidation?

"I loved working with id, and if I had another chance to work with them on just about anything at all I would jump at it. But Kevin [Cloud] has always said to us that we should be creating new intellectual property, that we should be careful to not fall into the trap of producing endless ports and expansions. We thought, on the whole, that it would be nice to be able to create something completely original."

The new project also marks the studio's first foray into console development – which consoles have yet to be announced, but they're certainly enjoying experimenting – for which a ramp-up will be necessary. Wedgwood still plans to keep things relatively small, estimating growth to about 60 people, but moving to a new office is on the cards the next few months.

New size, new project, new publisher, new offices. But one thing's for sure: that modest setting, that quiet studio, that Conservative Club; all those preconceptions are about to become much harder to form.

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MEET THE BEST OF THE BEST

Last month, 600 of you rolled up to the Metropole Hotel in Brighton to find out who the key winners were at this year's Develop Industry Excellence Awards. 17 prizes rewarded your efforts in games development over the past year. Here, we celebrate each winner and give you a chance to re-live the sights and sounds of the event, hosted by comedian Glenn Wool. Enjoy…

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Grand Prix
Rockstar Games

THE JUDGES

Develop would like to thank the following for taking time out to vote for this year's winners…

David Amor (Relentless), **Toby Barnes** (Games:Edu), **Ian Baverstock** (Kuju), **Colin Bell** (Juice Games), **Owain Bennallack** (Develop), **Thomas Bidaux** (Independent), **Linus Blomberg** (Avalanche), **David Braben** (Frontier), **John Broomhall** (Broomhall Productions), **Martyn Brown** (Team 17), **Nick Burton** (Rare), **Simon Byron** (Thetriforce.com), **Charles Cecil** (Revolution), **John Chasey** (Finblade), **Gavin Cheshire** (Codemasters), **Martyn Chudley** (Bizarre Creations), **Tim Closs** (Ideaworks 3D), **Ed Daly** (Zoe Mode), **Jason Della Rocca** (IGDA), **Michael Denny** (SCEE), **Stuart Dinsey** (Intent Media), **Chris Doran** (Geomerics), **Andrew Eades** (Relentless), **Harvey Elliott** (EA Bright Light), **David Eves** (amBX), **Ed Fear** (Develop), **Michael French** (Develop), **Guillaume de Fondaumiere** (Quantic Dream), **Rick Gibson** (Games Investor), **Ian Goodall** (Aardvark), **Thor Gunnarsson** (CCP Games), **David Hawkins** (Exient), **Miles Jacobson** (Sports Interactive), **Richard Jacques** (Richard Jacques Studio), **Patrick Jocelyn** (Autodesk), **Dave Jones** (Realtime Worlds), **Jon Jordan** (Develop), **Jason Kingsley** (Rebellion), **William Latham** (Goldsmiths), **Chris Lee** (FreeStyle Games), **Ian Livingstone** (Eidos), **Neil Long** (MCV), **Jamie MacDonald** (SCEE), **David Millard** (NiKNaK), **James North-Hearn** (Foundation 9), **Patrick O'Luaniagh** (nDreams), **Patric Palm** (Hansoft), **Jason Perkins** (Curve), **Simon Phillips** (Gusto), **Elizabeth Prince** (Amiqus), **Mark Rein** (Epic Games), **Torsten Reil** (NaturalMotion), **Tim Rogers** (Eurocom), **Martin de Ronde** (OneBigGame), **Nick Rooke** (Microsoft), **Chris Satchell** (Microsoft), **Vincent Scheurer** (Sarassin), **Jonathan Smith** (Traveller's Tales), **Darryl Still** (1C Publishing), **Jeff Tawney** (Razorback), **Antoine Villette** (Darkworks), **Paul Wedgwood** (Splash Damage), **Trevor Williams** (Swordfish), **Richard Wilson** (Tiga)

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CREATIVITY

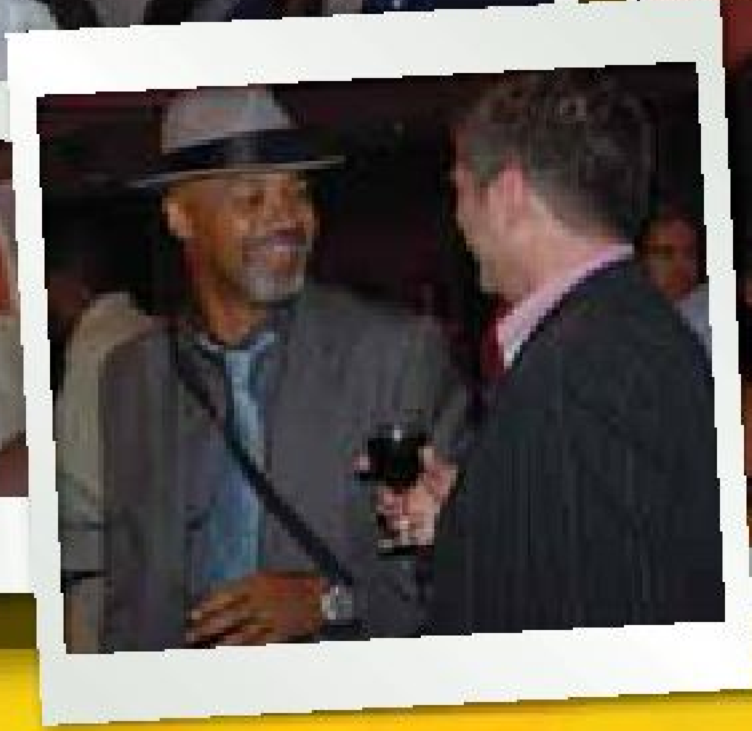
Best New IP
Lost Winds (Frontier Developments)

Audio Accomplishment
Rockstar North (*Grand Theft Auto IV*)

Publishing Hero
Nintendo

Best Use of a Licence
Lego Indiana Jones (Traveller's Tales)

Visual Arts
Rockstar North (*Grand Theft Auto IV*)



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AND THE OTHER WINNER IS...

During the Awards, sponsor Geomerics ran a competition to test the movie knowledge of those in attendance. Lisa Harding from the North West Development Agency was the winner – she gets an iPod Touch.

STUDIOS

Best Mobile Studio
Idealworks 3D

Best New Studio
Doublesix

Best In-House Developer
Rockstar North

Business Development
Realtime Worlds

Best Independent Developer
Splash Damage

ideaworks3D™

develop
WINNER

Ideaworks3D team 2008

Ideaworks3D, winner "Best Mobile Studio", Develop Excellence Awards
Thanks to all our industry partners for recognising Ideaworks3D as Europe's greatest mobile studio in 2008.

Nominated: Best Use Of A Licence (Metal Gear Solid Mobile) *Ideaworks3D works with the world's premier games industry IPs to create unique mobile games with commercial and critical success.*

Nominated: Technical Innovation (Airplay SDK) *Airplay SDK enables console developers to bring existing IPs and art/code assets to mobile and handheld platforms, including iPhone and N-Gage. Airplay SDK is licensed by many of the world's largest game publishers.*

Julian Jones, VP Business Development
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OPM will be attending the GC Games Convention in Leipzig this year, in Hall 1 stand L87. If you would like to book a meeting with us please call Kelly Weeding on +44 1206 544044.

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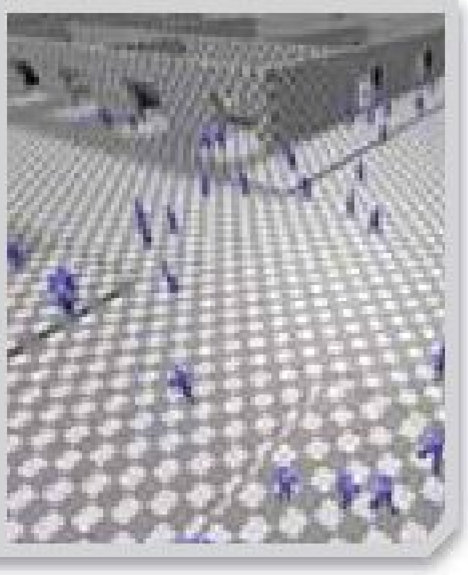
BUILD

THE LATEST TOOLS NEWS, TECH UPDATES & TUTORIALS

"We rejected the predictable 'invisible in-car radio'…" Race Driver: GRID audio, p57

TOOLS: AI.implant is back in games

p47



Unreal Engine 3 used to build TV show

p55

KEY RELEASE: Scaleform GFx

p57

Hands on advice

Exclusive tutorial on DS Development, p58

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Games should be about me

OUR VIEW OF THE UNIVERSE has changed significantly over the years, thanks to the efforts of Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo, but it's fair to assume none of those esteemed scientists would have understood the thoughts running through the minds of the four speakers at 10:15-ish on the morning of Thursday 31st July 2008 in the Hilton Metropole hotel, Brighton.

Of course, being speakers, we all assumed the universe revolved around us, so the rude interruption of the fire alarm could only be due to something we'd done: a PowerPoint slide involving the swastika; flicking a light switch; a light clearing of the throat; or the call for questions. Yes, like the autistic boy who thought 9/11 happened because he stepped on a crack in the pavement, us – the speakers – all apparently assumed we had triggered of the fire alarm.

But like the Edinburgh International Game Festival 2006 (or whatever it was called that year), it was merely a wakeup call for the sleepers on the back row and the local fire appliances. That dying breed, the smokers, got another opportunity to puff away too.

Still, it makes you think. This cutting across normal life in a me-way is the sort of thing that should be commonplace in games – after all, games really are designed to be experiences that revolve around you, the player. But despite Develop being a conference jam-packed with industry expertise, that fire alarm was probably the most surprising me-related event during the entire three days, and that includes another great Glenn Wool set.

Maybe next year someone can give a 9.30am post-awards talk on Karl Jaspers, game design and *Existenz*? Just as long as it's not me…

Jon Jordan
jon.jordan@intentmedia.co.uk

< CODING >

BEST KEPT SECRETS

From simple multiplayer tools, GameSpy's technology now enables sophisticated features such as data mining and in-game commerce

ATLAS, Direct2Game, Team

Price: Available on request
Company: Gamespy
Contact: +01 310 280 7803
www: www.poweredbygamespy.com

A FRUSTRATION FOR MANY middleware companies is the length of time between signing clients and being able to talk publicly about the titles their technology is being used in. When it comes to GameSpy's range of online services though, this is less of a problem given that the company provides the backend and networking SDK for the Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection, which by definition powers all Wii and DS online functionality.

Even with that proviso, director of technology Todd Northcutt was still revelling in the reflected glory the company received for its involvement with three of the biggest games of the year so far: *Mario Kart Wii*, *Super Smash Bros Brawl* and *GTA IV*.

"In the span of a month, our technology was being used in games that sold 20 million copies and was being used by around 10 million gamers. It's been pretty amazing and proves online is just getting more and more important," he says.

Of course, that's hardly rocket science. Even single player-only games now require online features if only in terms of downloadable content. But what Northcutt is really enthused about is the way the online status of games is shaking up the entire process of development; even the entire process of managing a franchise.

"With *GTA IV*, in four weeks we'd collected stats on 12,000 man-years of gameplay," he says. "In the past, publishers used these statistics purely for public consumption, so it was things like how many bullets you fired or how many races you won. Now however publishers are interested in data mining to see how people play the game and use that information to keep their audience happy, as well as applying them to expansion packs. These are tools to gather business intelligence about what your customers are doing."

Of course, online games developers have been doing this sort of thing for years. Northcutt says he's seeing the smartest traditional studios setting up dedicated teams to use this data.

"It definitely requires a new way of thinking," he points out. "People have to take a franchise approach and look not just at the lifecycle of individual titles but entire lifecycles. The guys who are ahead of the curve have online groups, which aren't focused on a specific title but the online experience in general. For example, Infinity Ward has an active community manager who talks to their multiplayer audience and Relic has dedicated guys for its online audience."

GameSpy enables this way of working with its ATLAS system, which received a major upgrade at the start of 2008. In conjunction with the Sake persistent database, it can track almost any in-game activity via a simple API. It encrypts data, which can then be processed in various ways using a web-based admin tool. It can also feed results into other packages such as GameSpy's Arena competition platform to populate ladders and the like.

Other related technologies GameSpy is currently working on include the Team SDK solution, which will enable developers to extend the social aspects of gameplay, as well as gamers themselves to manage teams both in-game and via web sites.

"We're less than a month away from having the SDK released. It ties in with all our other tech such as the buddy system, the status system and ATLAS," Northcutt says. "It will also be integrated into Unreal Engine 3 so anyone with a license can access it as a free technology upgrade. I'd expect it to turn up in games shipping in spring 2009."

Another piece of the puzzle will be revealed as the Direct2Game turnkey commerce tool can be used in-game. "That's launching in August in a game from THQ and will let players buy all the different classes and races they would have only otherwise been able to get access to by buying all the expansion packs," Northcutt says. "We're really excited about seeing how the public react to that."

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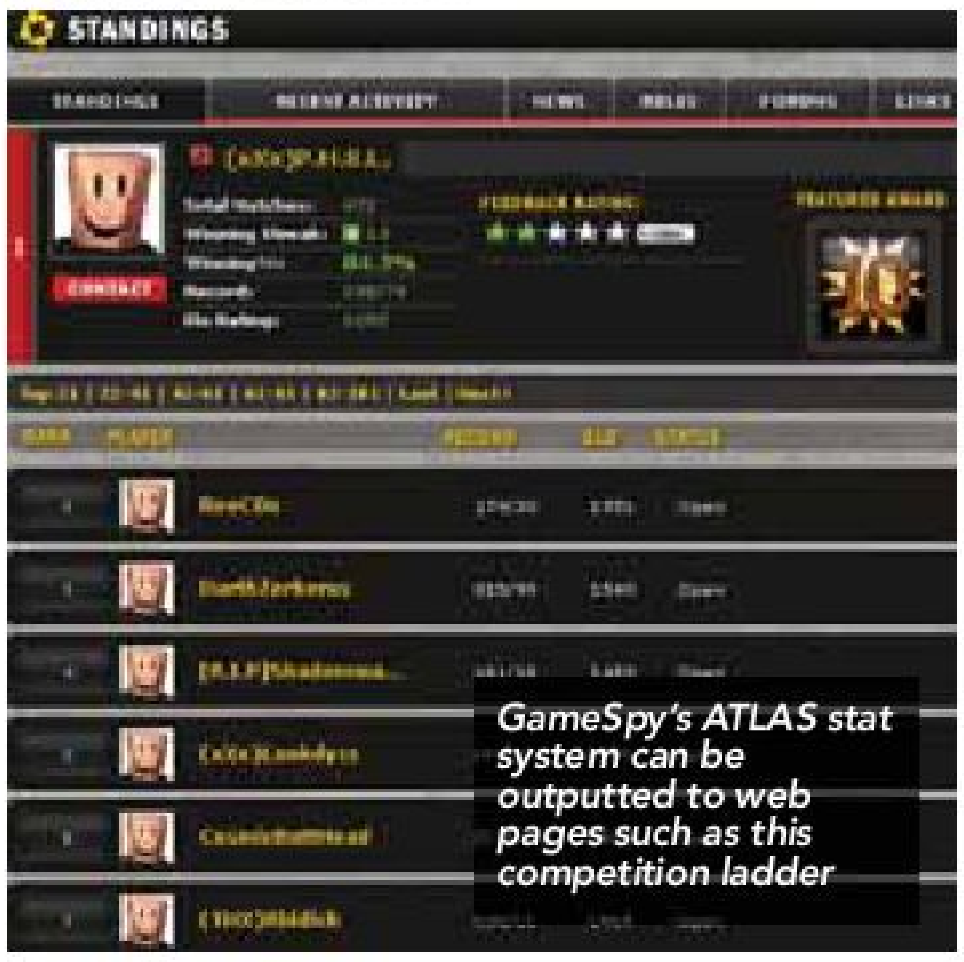


GameSpy's ATLAS stat system can be outputted to web pages such as this competition ladder

< CODING >

BUILDING STRONGER WALLS

The latest Glasgow start-up is all about protecting your crown jewels

Metafortress

Price: Available on request
Company: Metaforic
Contact: +44 141 333 6580
www: www.metaforic.com

THERE ARE FEW THINGS more likely to inflame the online ire of consumers – whether music buyers or gamers – as the perceived heavy-handed use of digital rights managements. Just think back to the StarForce crusades of 2005-2006 or, more recently, the SecuROM controversies concerning *BioShock* or the *Mass Effect* reactivation debacle. Frankly it's not going too far to say this sort of thing is now considered an inalienable, if capitalist, human right.

It's a brave company to enter such waters with a new anti-piracy product then but Glasgow start-up Metaforic seems to display little fear. Set up by Andrew McLennan and Neil Stewart, once of developer Steel Monkeys, it's been quietly working on its patent-pending smarts for a number of years under the auspices of Scottish technology institute ITI Techmedia. Now it's ready to launch its product, called Metafortress, into the commercial world.

"We know from bitter experience how soul-destroying piracy can be," says CEO McLennan. "You spend the last three weeks of a project in total crunch mode and before the game's in the shops, most of Russia's already playing it for free."

"Our first thought was the protection has to be in the application," explains McLennan, of the basic approach which has been referred to a network of interleaved checks. "The second thing we decided was we're never going to make something uncrackable. What we're trying to do is make the hacking process long enough that the publisher sees the benefit in terms of additional revenue. The third thing was we didn't want to get into an arms races, which is where most anti-piracy software ends up. So we assume a hacker will have total control over any hardware the game or application is running on, as well as the application itself."

"None of the technologies in Metafortress are significantly weakened when the hacker knows how they work," adds CTO Stewart. "Even if the hacker has the source code with all the protection in it, it would take as long to remove it from the source code as it would to remove it from the executable."

It sounds powerful stuff, but McLennan says that what's as important as the ability to slow down Vladimir and his hacker neo-comrades is making the entire process easy for the developer to use. A major source of badly protected games are quick favours run off for marketing or PR. To take piracy seriously, every version of a game that leaves a studio needs to be secure as the final gold master.

"The best way to use Metafortress is to make it part of your build system using your IDE," McLennan says. "You can set it up in such a way that every build is a protected build so you can never release something that's vulnerable. What we do is we build the protection into the software itself so you need to run an initial process, which takes about an hour end-to-end, and after that it's just an additional five minutes process per build."

He's called Vladimir and he wants to steal your game

As for the consumer, they shouldn't even know Metafortress is being used. "We're totally transparent to the end-user," McLennan ends. "They won't even know we're there and we can even protect the system a publisher currently uses, whether license key or online authentication, it doesn't really matter so we're complimentary from that point of view too."

www.metaforic.com

< CODING >

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Artificial intelligence package AI.implant is available for commercial licensing. Again.

AI.implant v5.3

Price: Available on request
Company: Presagis
Contact: +1 514 341 3874
www: www.presagis.com

IF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE PACKAGE AI.implant was a celebrity, it would probably have its own colour supplement in *Heat* or *Star* magazine, such has been the frequency of its industry dalliances. Starting as a well-brought up pathfinding tool from Montreal, it slowly built a solid reputation in both films and games, being acquired by Canadian simulation company Engenuity in late 2005.

After this came the big time however with Engenuity, in turn, being taken over by billion-dollar industry and military sim company CAE. But after a couple of months, AI.implant's creator left to try his hand at games development while AI.implant became available for game customers under a new licensing agreement that effectively swapped payment for co-marketing on finished products. Issues such as ongoing support and product development for consoles were less than transparent. Instead, CAE's ongoing focus for the product were well-paying modelling and simulation clients, where it could package AI.implant with other tools and services, which it did through its Presagis division.

But now it seems, the circle has turned. Once again, AI.implant is available for commercial license by games companies under standard licensing and support terms for PC, Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3. Confusion? What confusion?

"Last year, we announced the program to offer triple-A game developers a version of AI.implant essentially at no cost to allow us to grow the product for the other markets in which we sell it, primarily modelling and simulation," explains Robert Kopersiewich, Presagis' vice president of product management.

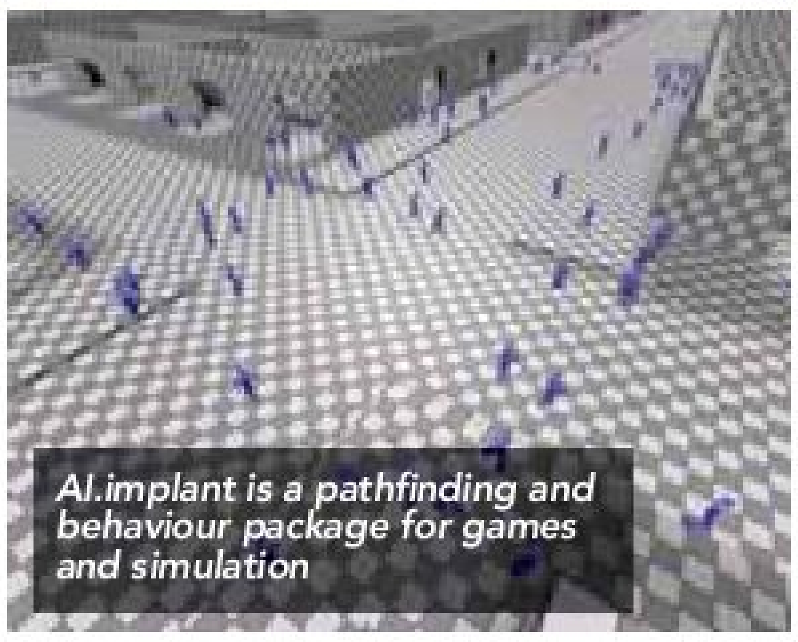
"The goal was to build up the product and generate some marketing activity with our game customers. This was very successful and we kept the program in place until recently. As a result, we've had lots of requests for using AI.implant in commercial games and so we allow games customers to have access to the regular commercial versions of AI.implant following our normal licensing and terms of sales."

As well as these ongoing requests, Kopersiewich says the growing ubiquity of games consoles within the commercial simulation space also makes the move sensible.

"More and more, we find our modelling and simulation customers are developing for consoles," he explains. "We see a lot of primary contractors on the military side looking at game platforms to put an element of fun into their products, particularly to appeal to the young users who have grown up using games."

Of course, the specific requirements of the modelling and simulation crowd – who tend to be developing training systems under government contracts – are very different to games customers, but Kopersiewich says some components, such as AI.implant, can flourishes in both markets. That's why CAE bought the technology in the first place, and that's why the license split between the two markets is roughly 50:50.

AI.implant is integrated into Unreal Engine 3


AI.implant is a pathfinding and behaviour package for games and simulation

The result is the future of AI.implant as a piece of games middleware is assured. "We're typically releasing new versions on a quarterly basis and these always support all platforms so that's PC, Xbox 360, PlayStation 3 and Unreal Engine 3," he says.

www.presagis.com

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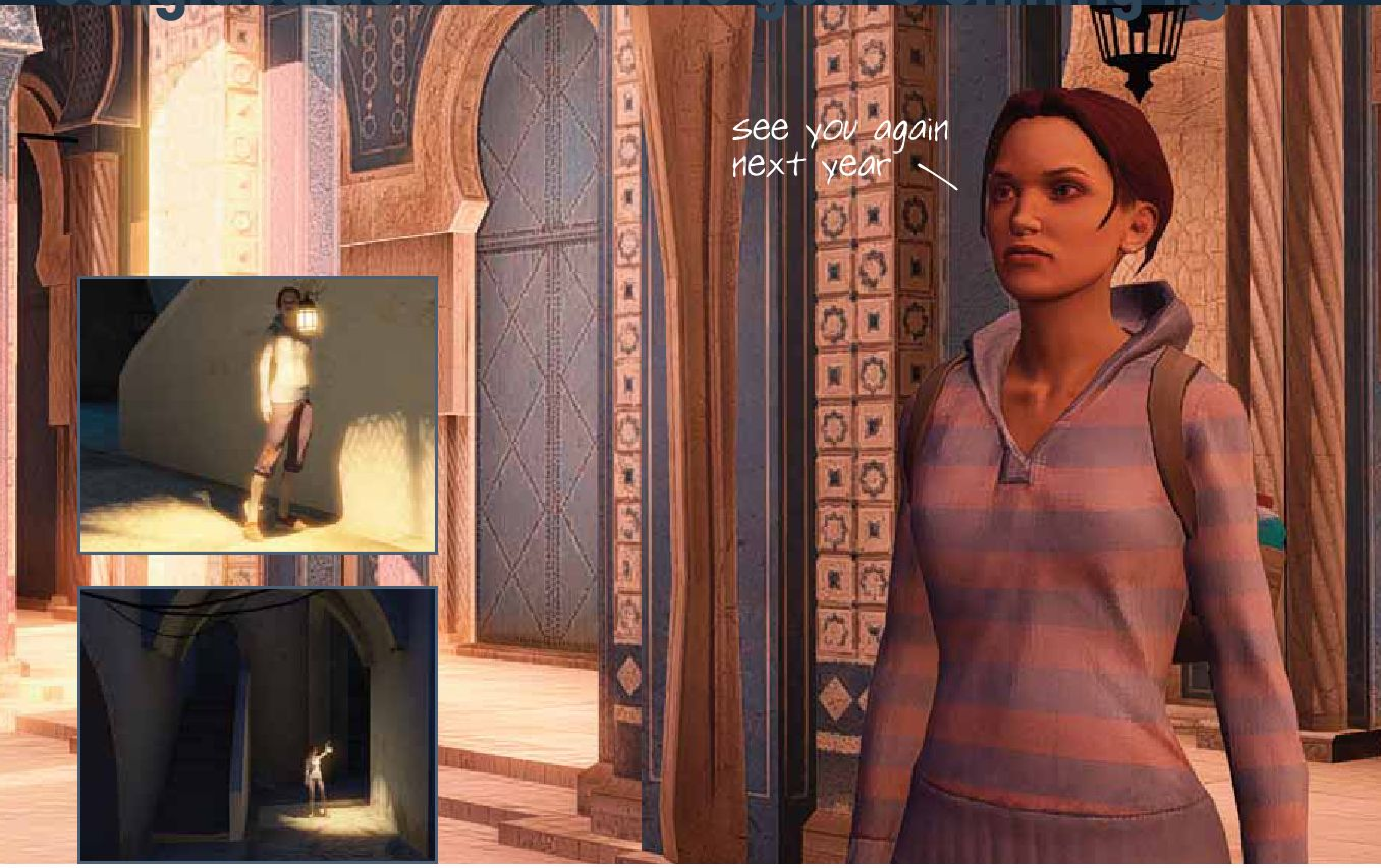

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MMOENGINES

Engines to get connected

The most work-intensive, most risky game projects deserve the most flexible, most collaborative development tools available. **Jon Jordan** welcomes you to the www of MMO gaming technology…

These days it's hard to keep track of all the online games being developed. Partly it's because there's quite a lot of them and partly it's because a lot of them don't actually make it to commercial release. The costs of development are high, but the costs of a failed launch are even more disastrous.

So you'd think middleware would be an even more obvious decision, but while the likes of BigWorld and HeroEngine are slowly gaining the status of production-proved tools, the mysteries of separation between client and server-side technology remains sufficient to stop anyone claiming to be the sector's de facto standard. In fact, it could be argued the likes of Unreal Engine 3 or Gamebryo are as popular as anything listed here - at least in terms of the client-side part of the MMO equation.

Whether this state of affairs will ever change remains open to question, particularly following the 'failure' of big company projects such as Sun Microsystems's Project Darkstar. Certainly, at present it seems that developers-cum-middleware companies continue to have the upper hand with three of the five listed companies developing their own MMOGs in parallel with their work on commercial middleware. Physician, heal thyself.

SIMUTRONICS

TECHNOLOGY
HeroEngine

CLIENTS
BioWare Austin, ZeniMax Online, IT Territory, HSC Labs

PLATFORMS
Linux (server), PC (client)

INTEGRATION WITH
Many, including *Alseek, FMOD, PhysX, Scaleform, SpeedTree,* and *Wwise*

PRICE
Evaluation, prototype, basic and source licences available, price available on request

CONTACT
heroengine@play.net

HeroEngine is an always-live online game development engine

www.heroengine.net

Built on the back of experience from text-based online games, Simutronics' HeroEngine takes a consistent approach when it comes to the creation and deployment of MMOs. Launched in 2006, after five years of work, it provides an integrated server-client engine and development system, both of which support a dynamic plug-in architecture, enabling collaborative and 'always live' environment for prototyping, building and testing of games.

BIGWORLD

TECHNOLOGY
BigWorld Technology Suite

CLIENTS
Cheyenne Mountain, Netease, Slipgate Ironworks, Vivendi plus over a dozen others

HOST PLATFORMS
Linux (server), Windows (client) plus Xbox 360, PlayStation 3 and mobile

INTEGRATION WITH
Diamondware, Scaleform, Spatial Voice, SpeedTree, Umbra, and Vivox

PRICE
Includes up-front license, ongoing royalty and annual support fee

CONTACT
licensing@bigworldtech.com

BigWorld was one of the first complete MMO engines

www.bigworldtech.com

One of the first complete engines designed specifically for the massively multiplayer online market, BigWorld continues to prove popular. Technology-wise, it's split into four basic components: a dynamically load-balanced server infrastructure that can supply a large, contiguous world; live server deployment and maintenance tools; a DirectX 9-class game client including integrated physics and AI; and a collaborative development environment including world, model and particle editors.

MONUMENTAL

TECHNOLOGY
Monumental Technology Suite

CLIENTS
Available on request

PLATFORMS
PC (Windows/Linux), Xbox 360, PS3

INTEGRATION WITH
3ds Max, Diamondware, dPVS, FMOD, GNI, Maya, SpeedTree, Vivox

PRICE
Prototype, production and commercial licenses available

CONTACT
enquiries@monumentalgames.com

Monumental is making its own game in the shape of Football Superstars

www.monumentalgames.com

Monumental Games takes a production-centric approach to online game development with its Monumental technology suite. It offers a complete tool-chain for rapid content creation by artists and designers, enabling them to preview their assets and get them into the game quickly. The technology uses many procedural techniques, for both terrain and characters, allowing for scalable asset and content generation. It recently signed up ten developers for its prototype licence.

MULTIVERSE

TECHNOLOGY
Multiverse Platform

CLIENTS
Over 10,000 registered teams

HOST PLATFORMS
Windows

INTEGRATION WITH
COLLADA, Flash, FMOD, SpeedTree, Vivox

PRICE
Free for development, royalty up to 10 per cent

CONTACT
info@multiverse.net

Multiverse is enabling indie studios to make MMOGs

www.multiverse.net

Feeding the Web 2.0 and user generated content approaches to MMO development comes Multiverse, which offers a free development licence for its technology, as long as finished games are made available within its Multiverse Network. It's just released v1.5 of its technology which enables you to create multiple instances of worlds, as well as the Multiverse Voice System and a 2.5 times improvement in terms of 3D browser performance improvement.

ICARUS

TECHNOLOGY
Icarus Platform

CLIENTS
Available on request

HOST PLATFORMS
Windows

INTEGRATION WITH
3ds Max, Ageia, FaceFX, IBM, Vivox MilkShape, Motion Analysis, SpeedTree,

PRICE
Available on request

CONTACT
info@icarusstudios.com

FALLEN EARTH

Icarus is making its own MMOG, Fallen Earth, with its tech

www.icarusstudios.com

A prime example of a MMO developer that's built its own tools and is now offering them on a commercial basis, Icarus reckons the main selling point of its Platform is that it handles everything from content production and asset management tools to game system modules and a full suite of network administration utilities.

New features include an in-game auction system plus engine buffs such as volumetric fog and light blooms.

Flow charts

by Neil Hutchinson

Black Rock Studio

I'VE BEEN THINKING a lot recently about how data flows around the multitude of different and disparate systems in our games. This has been primarily motivated by rumours of the dozens of cores we'll be dealing with in the next generation of consoles, but also about how this can help us now.

Data Flow Analysis has been around in computer science for decades and is a technique utilised at instruction level by optimising compilers. Macro Data Flow Analysis, its higher level cousin, has been deployed as a scheduling paradigm in distributed processing. Central to both is the notion of the data flow graph, and creating one of these as nothing more than a rough paper exercise enables data dependencies to be seen in a whole new light.

What became apparent was that data didn't really flow at all; sucking, in all that this implies, would be a more accurate definition. Our code's reliance on global managers for a great many things was largely culpable here. If a function needed some information from another module it would go and get it via the appropriate manager, with all the implications that has for cache misses and thread safety. Somewhat naively, this wasn't of great concern to us until our PS3 dev kits arrived when we quickly realised code structured in this way couldn't easily be ported to run on an SPU, and with only two cores on the PPU this just wasn't going to fly.

Identifying exactly where data needs to be and when it needs to be there makes it immediately obvious which parts of the code can be executed in parallel and hence where the bottlenecks are. In turn this allows a minimal operating set of input data for a particular module to be determined which will enable it to execute successfully and produce a set of output data. This then constitutes the interface to the module, and it has a corresponding controller running on the main thread responsible for marshalling the data it needs as input and produces as output.

In addition to identifying bottlenecks the data flow graph may also highlight similar operations that are occurring frequently but erratically all over the game update. It may be possible to defer their execution and buffer them up such that they can be computed in a tight loop – maybe on an SPU – in a much more cache friendly way. A typical example might be view frustum tests or bounding box intersections.

Of course, not all code will fit neatly into such an idealistic model no matter how hard you try, but for code that will it has a very positive effect on code quality, modularity and, most importantly, concurrency.

www.blackrockstudio.com

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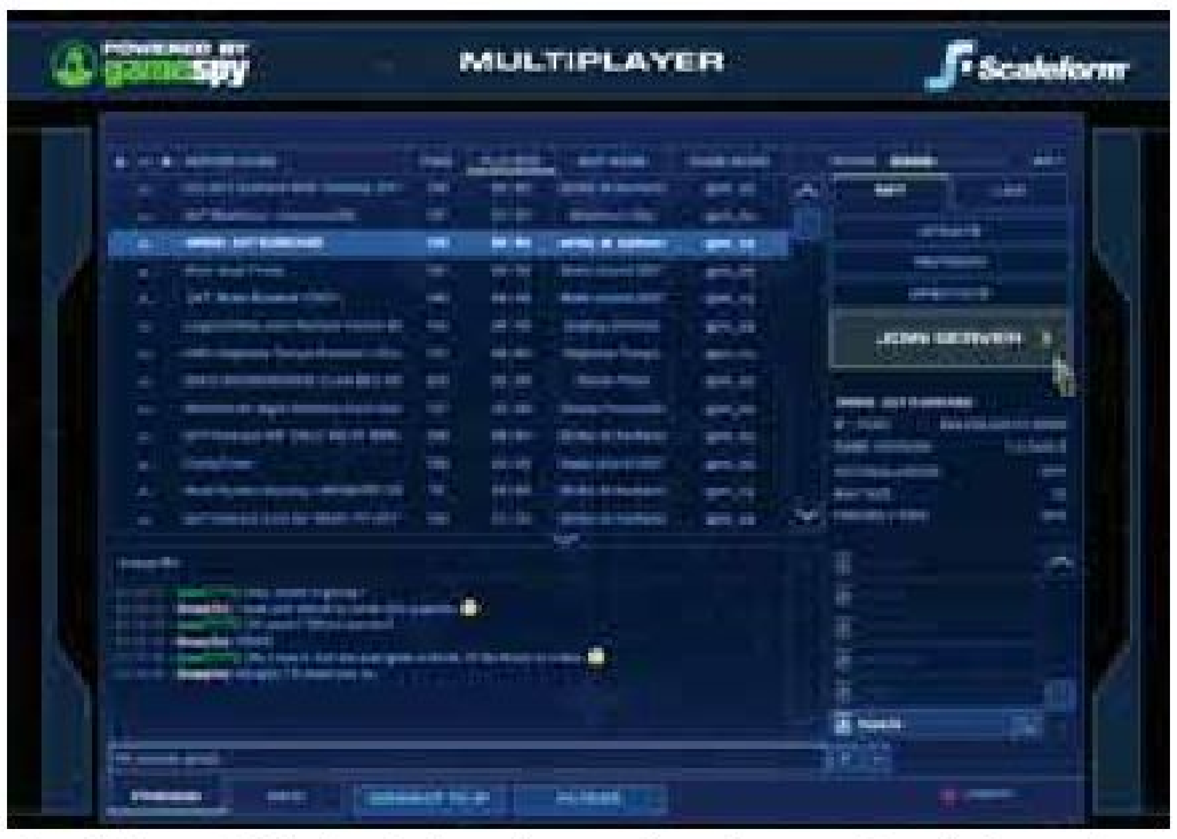
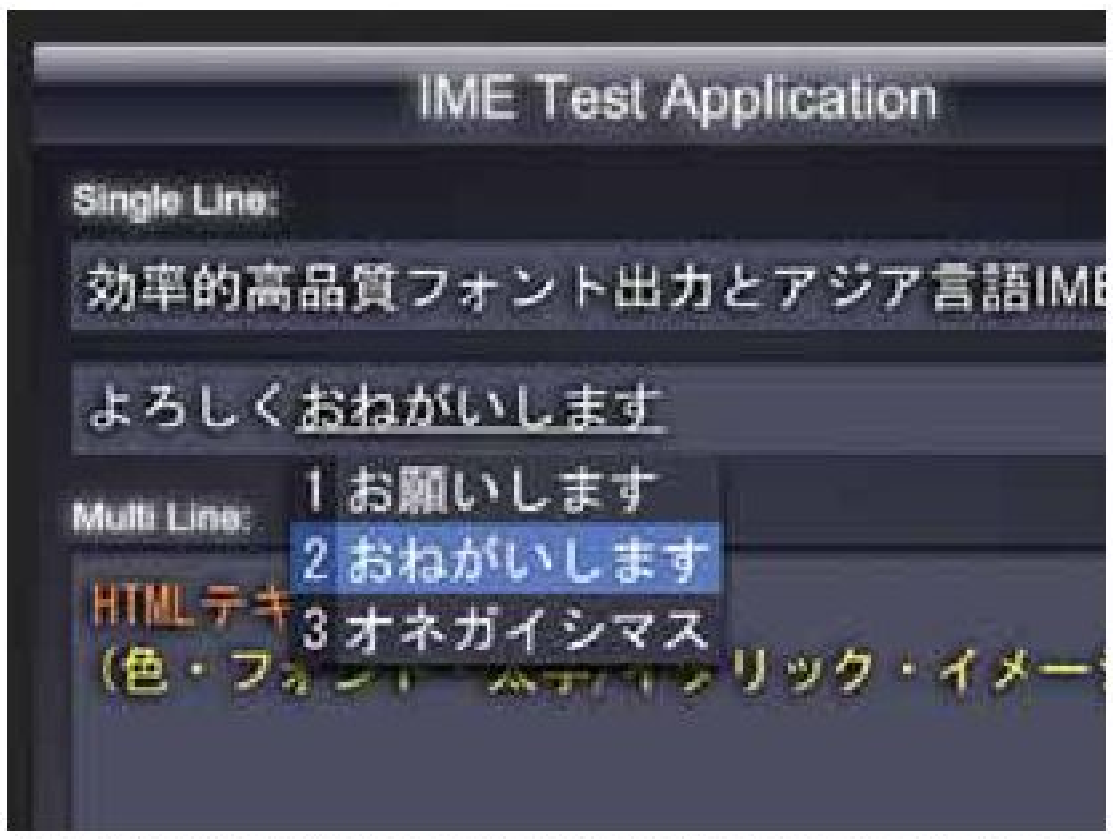
KEYRELEASE

Not Flash, Just Scaleform

Scaleform's Flash-based user interface middleware has hit the industry's sweet point in terms of price to productivity, **Jon Jordan** discovers…



Scaleform Lobby is designed to reduce the overhead of creating multiplayer interfaces



効率的高品質フォント出力とアジア言語IM

よろしくおねがいします

1 お願いします
2 おねがいします
3 オネガイシマス

HTMLテキ

The GFx IME add-on enables you to offer seamless in-game support so users can input text in East Asian languages

Maybe it's a mixture of a lack of ambition and/or inverted pride but you don't often hear middleware execs talking about how they're running the fastest growing company in the industry. Brendan Iribe, CEO of game user interface vendor Scaleform, has no such qualms.

"We signed over 50 games in the first eight months from our launch in March 2006," he says. "In 2007, we signed 120 games, and this year we're on track to be in 200 new games. By the end of 2008, between 300 and 400 games will be using our technology. We're the fastest growing middleware company out there."

It's hard to argue with those figures. But, as ever, behind such an overnight success story comes a tale of hard work and a certain amount of luck too. Back to the source. Brendan Iribe met CTO Michael Antonov at college. Both were into games, with Iribe on the business and art side and Antonov the programmer. Originally, they thought about developing their own game and started to play around with the tools required. But Iribe's experience with multimedia for trade shows and exhibitions, plus their growing experience of the games industry, resulted in a more lateral approach.

"We saw there was a deficiency in terms of visual tools, so we worked on it for a while and decided bringing a user interface solution such as Adobe Flash to the games market would be successful," Iribe recalls. "Of course, we didn't know how hard it would be. After four years of attempting to make our own version of Flash Studio, we started talking to developers and instead made a UI engine powered by Flash. Even then it was another 3 years of development before we released the first version of GFx."

> **"We're providing a Flash pipeline, not a Scaleform pipeline. Our foundation is the efficiency of the Flash workflow…"**
>
> **Brendan Iribe, Scaleform**

Happily, this learning experience was funded by personal finance rather than venture capital, with that source, Iribe's uncle, eventually coming onboard as CFO. Neatly, this coincided with Scaleform's first proper year of operations and the since profitable annual returns.

The icing on the cake was the reputation of the company's first clients. "Crytek had looked critically at the product for several years before signing up to use it in *Crysis*," Iribe says, as if trying to play down the story. "As a new company, you need a champion – a big game – so Crytek was great, and then we got the call from BioWare. They wanted to use GFx. We wondered if it would be used in *Mass Effect*. They said they were going to use it in all their titles."

It sounds too good to be true, but in actual fact, this the only way the sort of low margin, high volume productivity tools supplied by Scaleform can work. It's not a Unreal Engine, more a SpeedTree or Miles Sound engine. Success only comes if it's used very widely, as Iribe's claim that 16 of the top 20 publishers are licensees underlines.

But three years into operations, there are plenty more, higher volume or higher margin, areas for Scaleform to investigate. The current major push is setting up the company's Asian operations with documentation, support and website being localised into Korean, Chinese and Japanese. Scaleform will also have full-time sales staff in each territory. Then the focus will shift to new technological features (*see boxout*).

"We're providing a UI solution and we need to do it globally," Iribe says. "It's fun but it's not world domination. It's UI domination in the games space. We're providing a Flash pipeline, not a Scaleform pipeline. Every game needs font, text and icons. We'll enable you to do some things you can't otherwise do such as animating your UI or putting it on 3D surfaces, but our foundation is the efficiency of the workflow we offer through Flash."

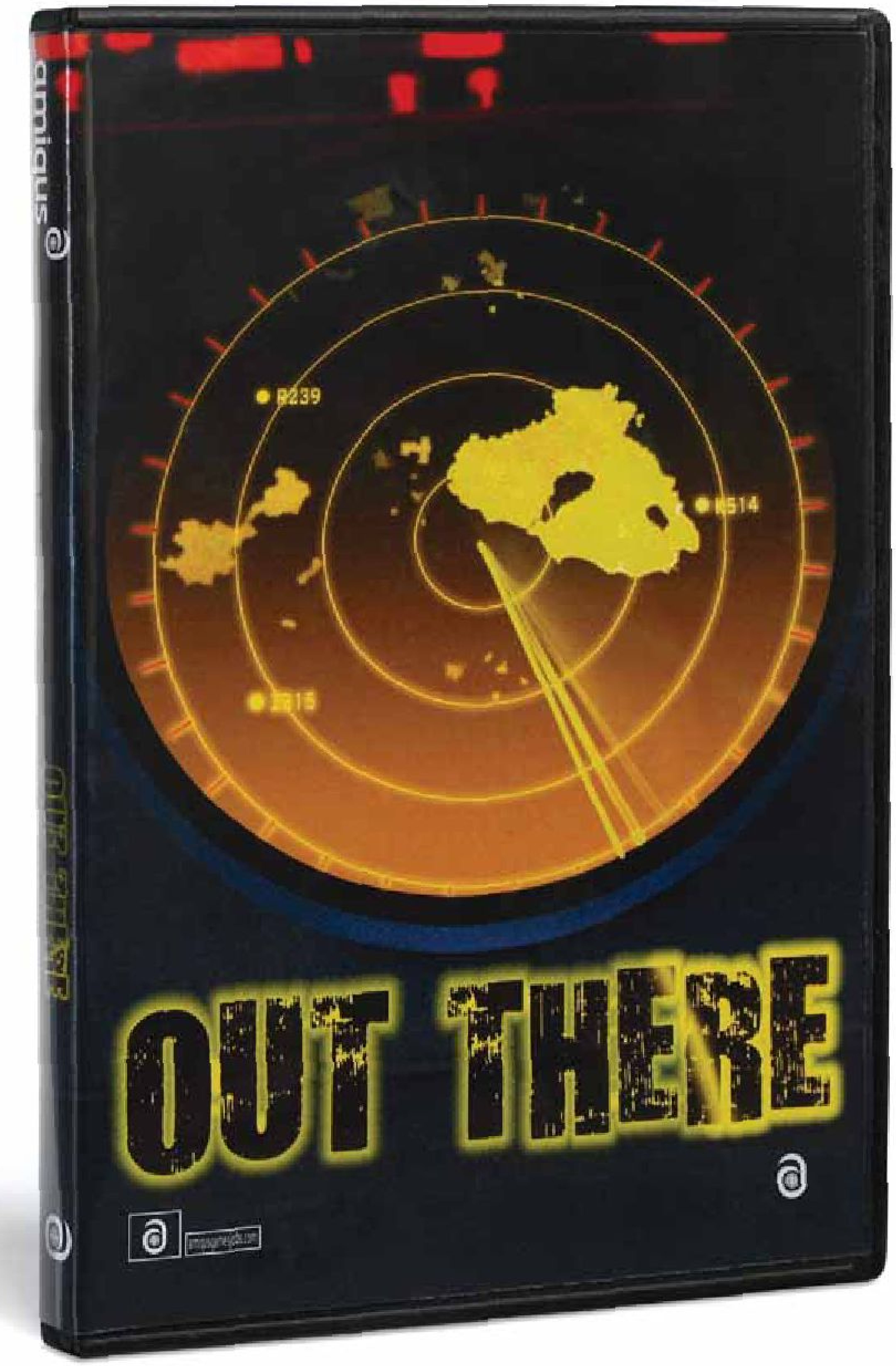
PRODUCT: GFx
COMPANY: Scaleform
PRICE: Available on request
CONTACT: +1 301 446 3200
W: www.scaleform.com

Brendan Iribe, CEO, Scaleform

More from Scaleform

Always the businessman, CEO Brendan Iribe says: "We're always looking to expand the business and make more money so we will be launching more products in 2009." Several are planned but he's uncharacteristic coy about going into details, at least about one of the planned extensions. "You can say we're thinking about expanding GFx with other complimentary middleware solutions," he decides. "They will be add-on products that create complimentary solutions. We're never going to make a 3D engine."

Then he changes his mind. "We're going to be doing a localisation product," he reveals. "No one does localisation because it's such a fragmented market. But user interface design, fonts, text and localisation go really well together. When you localise a game most of your efforts and problems concern the text and there we can offer an affordable, effective, streamlined process that helps manage it. A simple example. With the click of a button we can automatically check for overruns in every language. That's a huge saving right there."



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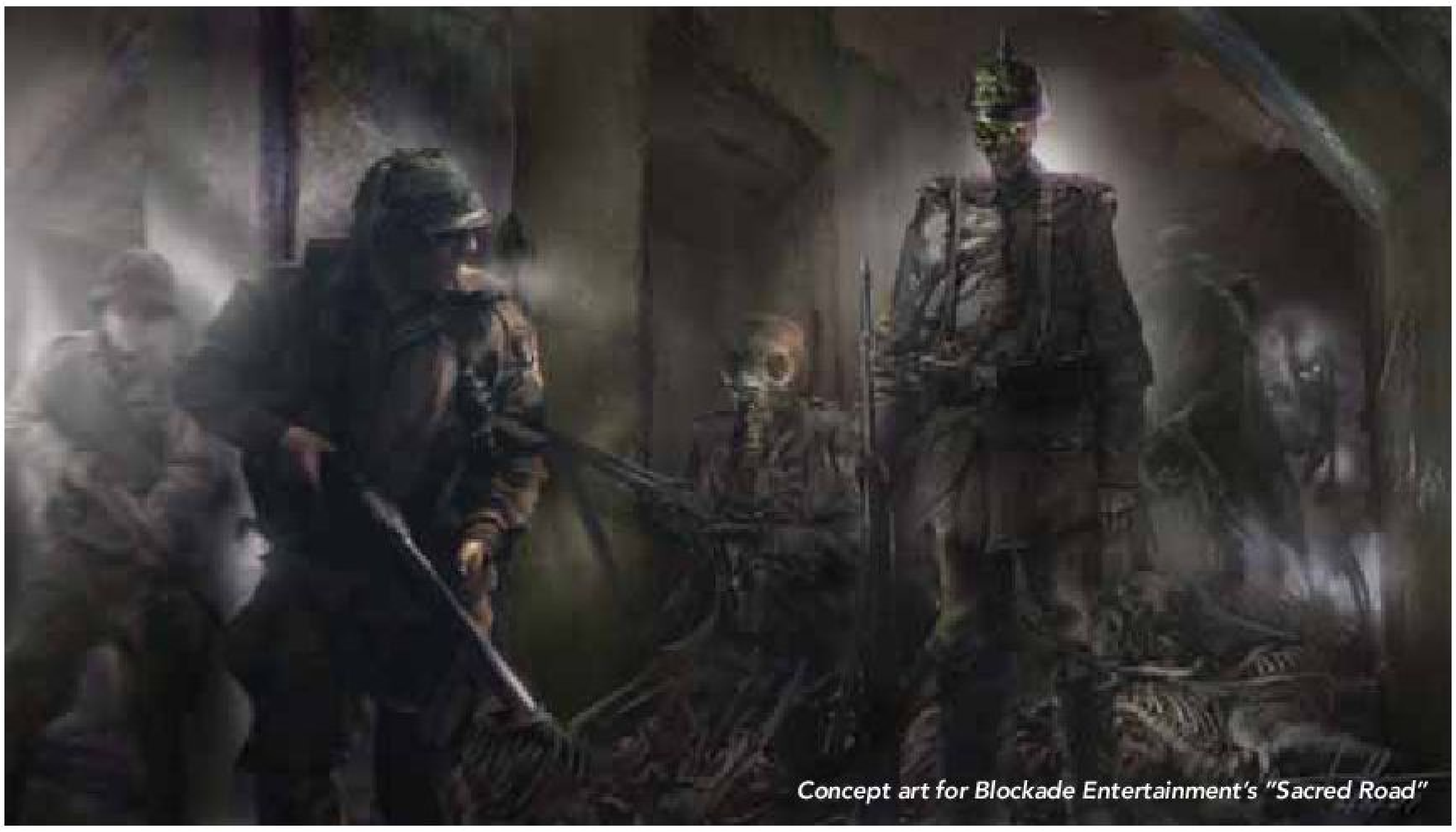
BLOCKADE ENTERTAINMENT PAVES A 'SACRED ROAD' WITH UNREAL ENGINE 3



Concept art for Blockade Entertainment's "Sacred Road"

Blockade Entertainment is an innovative studio conceived to create compelling animated experiences for television, online and film using modern game engine technology and video game assets. Founded by Brad Foxhoven, with partner Gearbox Software in tow, licensing Unreal Engine 3 has been a natural step in Blockade's quest to realising its creative vision.

With a successful proof of concept and a national commercial already under its belt, Blockade is now creating its first animated series, *Sacred Road*, using assets from Gearbox Software's *Brothers in Arms* series.

"One of the big advantages that Unreal Engine 3 brings to developing material for video or any other linear medium is the extremely fast iteration time," said Foxhoven.

"You can see the effects of changes you make almost instantly, which allows for very fast fine-tuning of many aspects of our work, particularly when it comes to camera work, post-process effects, and lighting. Being able to replay your work in real time and adjust lighting, animation, or post-process accordingly saves tons of time over a more traditional renderer."

Foxhoven's team has relied on many Unreal Engine 3 tools, including Matinee, which has been used for all of the scene setup and control. Blockade leverages the HDR rendering technology to create a smoother, more efficient pipeline.

The team also utilises the Cascade visual editor and particle system as well as the engine's post-process tools for incorporating motion blur, depth of field, and various lighting effects in the show.

"Unreal Engine 3 allows us to be more efficient in various stages of our production, giving us more time and resources to be experimental on how we approach each episode," explained Foxhoven. "We can stage and edit various aspects of the production, and not lose out on our timeline."

Foxhoven said the biggest advantage to adapting Unreal Engine 3 for Hollywood is its speed.

"UE3 allows directors to create multiple takes, and edit those takes on the fly," he said. "They can see their changes when they want them, allowing the production to continue to move ahead, and not wait for extended rendering to occur. Plus, the cost benefit allows for more shows to be produced in this format, giving a broader basis of opportunity with multiple distribution partners." Despite the lower production cost, Foxhoven added that he thinks *Sacred Road* will have the appearance of the best cinematics in today's most technologically advanced games. He added that the show looks like a fully rendered CG production, and the visual quality is spectacular.

The Blockade production team has already ramped up from 12 people to 50, and in addition to this first series, additional 3D shows will be created using Unreal Engine technology down the line.

"We have now created a very robust pipeline that allows us to scale up for additional projects relatively quickly," added Foxhoven. "The engine enables us to keep a consistent pipeline on what we bring into the company, and how we export the shows and their multiple formats. We are currently targeting six series with multiple episode orders for each."

CAPCOM PURCHASES SECOND UNREAL ENGINE 3 LICENSE

Capcom has entered into its second agreement with Epic Games to use Unreal Engine 3 for an unannounced project.

"Unreal Engine 3 is a perfect fit for this project," said Keiji Inafune, managing corporate officer, R&D Management Group, Capcom.

"Not only does the development team have thorough knowledge of Unreal Engine 3, the general versatility of Unreal Engine 3 will fully meet the requirements particular to this project."

"One of the major advantages is the well-established support system," he added. "We are delighted to enter into this license agreement, and have strong backup by Epic Games. With Unreal Engine 3, we can expect high development efficiency as well as high creativity within the development team."

UPCOMING EPIC ATTENDED EVENTS:

GC Developers Conference
Leipzig, Germany
August 18-20, 2008

NVISION
San Jose, CA
August 25-27, 2008

CEDEC
Tokyo, Japan
September 9-11, 2008

Please email:
mrein@epicgames.com
for appointments.

To discuss anything raised in this column or general licensing opportunities for Epic Games' *Unreal* engine, contact:
mrein@epicgames.com

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***Mark Rein** is vice president of Epic Games based in Raleigh, North Carolina. Since 1992 Mark has worked on Epic's licensing and publishing deals, business development, public relations, academic relations, marketing and business operations.*

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Senior Engine Programmer
£Excellent + Benefits + Bonus

North West LC308F2

Are you an experienced console / PC programmer who really knows how to wring performance out of a machine? You will be working in the Render Tech Team and be instrumental in pushing the development of the next-gen rendering components of the this company's cross-platform engine on PS3, 360 and PC.

Contact: lisa@aswift.com

Tools Programmer
£Excellent

South Midlands LC1911F2

Our client create cutting edge high-quality 3D character animation in real time by combining artificial intelligence, biomechanics, and dynamics simulation. They are currently seeking an Application/Tools Programmer with C/C++, Windows application development experience, WxWidgets / OpenGL.

Contact: lisa@aswift.com

Broadband Ent. Lead Programmer
to £40k DOE

London HH3467F2

You will be an experienced software engineer, who can take the lead role in the specification, design and development of our client's global systems for broadband distributed casual games. Their projects are short and varied - great opportunity for games programmer looking for a new challenge.

Contact: hollie@aswift.com

Graduate programmers
£18k - £22k

Various Locations HH100F

Aardvark Swift continue to help the next generation of programming talent make their mark in the games industry. If you are a talented and dedicated programmer looking for a first step into games get in touch now for advice on how to maximise your chance of success.

Contact: hollie@aswift.com

Producer / Project Manager
to £40k plus bonuses

North-West CW3828P

Stable, well-established and highly successful developer is looking to recruit an experienced Producer with at least 2 projects where they were responsible for the planning, scheduling, tracking, risk assessment & management of the team on ideally a PS3/360 title. The successful candidate will be working on a AAA branded cutting edge game.

Contact: colin@aswift.com

Development Manager
to £60k plus benefits

South-East CW3829DM

Established and stable independent developer which employs over 100 people is currently looking to make a key hire in a Development Manager to oversee all internal teams. The ideal candidate will have vast experience within Production, including experience of managing large teams of 65+ through a full development cycle.

Contact: colin@aswift.com

Lead Artist
£Excellent plus benefits

North-West SH1606LA

Established in 2004 this up and coming developer has Wii approved development status, and is currently working on a number of exciting prototypes for Nintendo platforms. You will be responsible for leading a small team of artists and will report directly to the Art Director. You should have a minimum of 3 years industry experience and prior experience leading a team. Spec on request.

Contact: simon@aswift.com

Senior Animator
£Neg DOE

Midlands KM3818SA

My client has have achieved critical and commercial success with their previous releases. They are looking for a Senior Animator to join their expanding art team. They must have industry experience to senior level and have the ability to lead a team. It is desirable that the successful candidate has worked on at least 2 published titles.

Contact: katie@aswift.com

Handheld / Mobile Programmer
€Excellent + relocation

Spain LC220F1

Work as part of a game development team, taking responsibility of the implementation, development of the top-level areas for a next-gen handheld videogame; including, but not limited to A.I.., in-game UI frameworks, user interaction, logic/scripting engines, etc. Excellent Role in a top location.

Contact: lisa@aswift.com

Senior Programmer
$Excellent + Relocation

Vancouver LC2026F

Chance to work for one of the world's leading developers on a very high profile project. You will have strong skills in one or more of the following - AI, Graphics, Networking, Physics and will have experience mentoring less experienced programmers.

Contact: lisa@aswift.com

QA Studio Manager
£Excellent + Benefits

Shanghai DJ1991QA

My client are is a leading games outsourcing company - their founders have created the largest international studio in China in the past, and now aim to operate the best and largest games production facilities in the world. They are looking for a QA Studio Manager to manage a complete QA Department as they work on next-gen titles for major clients.

Contact: danny@aswift.com

Design Director
AU$ Excellent + relocation

Australia SH322DD

Award winning, leading independent developer who has firmly established itself as the largest games developer in Australia is looking for an experienced Design Director - this role will be the key report for all design related roles across 3 studios and will establish the creative vision for all future titles. Previous experience in a similar role a must - more details available on request.

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HEARDABOUT

Race Driver: GRID

John Broomhall talks to Codemasters' Simon Goodwin and Adam Sawkins about the making of the studio's latest racing title…

Conquer a living, breathing evolving world of packed grids, devastating damage, intelligent opposition and unparalleled atmosphere… Racing just got exciting again. So reads the PR blurb about *GRID*, already backed up by impressive chart success. As the audio team reflects on a warm reception to its ten-month production from both punters and peers alike, what do they consider the most signficant aspects of their achievement?

Lead game audio programmer Adam Sawkins offers: "The approach to the music, and the context-sensitivity for both speech and crowd systems. We went for a unique music style that totally fits the game, rejecting the more predictable 'invisible in-car radio'. Composer Ian Livingstone drew on classic Hollywood car chases for inspiration. The bespoke interactive music design and coding enable a reactive score (e.g. swelling as you gain first place or romp a high speed corner - or dropping down to a moody bassline if you screw up). We use two 'bed' layers for each loop, separate percussion and melody layers introduced when the player takes the lead, a heavy bass layer rolled in by crashes, two layers to pile on the excitement in the final lap, and a 'high speed' layer for feedback on especially quick driving."

He adds: "Speech-wise, having context-sensitive reactions as well as co-driver calls dependent on track position is a big difference. For instance, slip-streaming might draw a compliment or you might be warned a driver ahead is spinning out, identifying them by name. There's more detailed crowd feedback too – both positive and negative – hurtle into a wall and you'll hear screaming as the crowd dive for cover!"

With *GRID* taking *DiRT*'s audio systems to a new level modelling 20 cars racing simultaneously, the mix was always likely to be a key challenge, says Sawkins. "Mixing 760 sound sources for the cars alone, plus music, collisions, damage, crowds and many other ambient sounds is obviously a headache – especially pack racing. We have to be ruthless on the number of voices playing and dynamically alter the mix based on cars numbers, game mode etc. A bunch of those 760 voices are produced by our granular approach to collisions deploying unique recordings for every car component (70 per car) split into small/medium/large impacts plus scraping, dangling, loosening and removing. With up to ten variants per type plus the use of real-time DSP, the variability is fantastic."

> ***"We rejected the predictable 'invisible in-car radio'…"***
>
> ***Adam Sawkins, Lead Games Audio Programmer***

Vital and foundational to *GRID*'s audio experience are the audio coding systems that harness hardware power. Explains principle audio tech programmer Simon Goodwin: "We use OpenAL on PC and 360 to give us a consistent API on Microsoft platforms, including PC hardware acceleration, isolating us from changes or inconsistencies between DirectSound and XAudio. We use MultiStream on PS3 and ATRAC3 compression, with up to 224 independent 512 band FFT-based MultiStream filters on PlayStation and simpler IIRs on the Microsoft platforms. There's custom code to map between them without losing the extra control possible on PS3. The physical voice count is lower on PC and 360 – typically around 120 voices – but our dynamic virtual voice system ensures correct sound prioritisation.

"Multiple listeners are very handy making updates more efficient as well as when balancing the audio – and our Ambisonic panning works brilliantly in 5.1 surround (or ideally 7.1). The old panning tricks that work for stereo and a narrow range in front of the listener fail for sounds to the side and rear because they don't account for the way we all localise sound using relative information from both ears. Pushing air on just one side is unrealistic and confuses the brain, whereas Ambisonics controls the phase and pressure of sounds all round the listener. You perceive smooth positioning and movement of sounds in all directions, rather than the 'pull to nearest speaker' holes or diffusion caused by psychoacoustically bogus pairwise panning. The more speakers you have, the better this works and the wider the 'sweet zone' between them.

Sawkins sums up: "Overall, we feel it's a great-sounding game and looking forward, we have a lot of cool ideas for the next. We know we can take it up another level given more time and resources."

FORMATS:
Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, PC (XP/Vista)

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER:
Codemasters

AUDIO TEAM:
Audio Manager: Will Davis
Audio Lead: Mark Knight
Sound Design: Mike de Belle, Andy Grier, Ed Walker
Additional Sound Design: Jethro Dunn, Oliver Johnson, John Davies, Stafford Bawler Greg Hill, Technicolour Interactive Services
Lead Game Audio Programmer: Adam Sawkins
Game Audio Programming: Giannis Ioannou
Additional Game Audio Programming: Hugh Lawry, Paul Penson, Rob Pattenden
Principal Audio Tech Programmer: Simon Goodwin
Central Tech Audio: Pete Goodwin, Aristotel Digenis
Music: Ian Livingstone
Additional Music: Aaron Sapp, Thomas J. Bergersen

THE NUMBERS:
Licensed music: Four tunes – intro FMV sequence, credits, two in the 'garage'
Bespoke music: Eight multitrack loops (eight layers each, 72 minutes in total) played during races plus eight stereo remixes used in replays; two-minute crescendo for the finale of the Le Mans event, and one more 'garage' piece.
Sound effects: 2,800
Dialogue: 15,000 lines

TECHNICAL RESOURCES:
Xbox360: One CPU core and 24 MB RAM, XMA compression
PS3: One dedicated SPU, 13 Mb RAM, ATRAC3 compression
PC: Around eight per cent of one modern CPU core, 174 Mb RAM, PCM plus some Ogg Vorbis (2.5 Gb of HD space for audio alone)

John Broomhall is an independent audio director, consultant and content provider
develop@johnbroomhall.co.uk
www.johnbroomhall.co.uk

Hands on advice

The continuing appeal of the DS across a broad range of demographics makes it a tempting platform – but there's some preconceptions that might trip you up, explain Exient's **Charles Chapman** and **Dave Hawkins**…

< CODING >

TUTORIAL:
NINTENDO DS
DEVELOPMENT

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Developing for the Nintendo DS is an attractive proposition for studios looking to work on relatively low-budget platforms. While the DS might not demand huge teams and colossal asset creation resources, developing for the platform requires a solid, structured approach and as much expertise as other formats. Here we're going to share some of our DS know-how, drawn from years of working with some of the biggest publishers in the industry such as THQ, Ubisoft and Electronic Arts.

GETTING STARTED

■ Assign good staff to your DS project

The DS may not be the all-singing, resource-rich monster that constitutes a modern home console, but that doesn't mean it should be relegated to the platform your junior staff cut their teeth on. Bear in mind that handheld development is often an exercise in precise optimisation at a very low level and expert management of the resources available. Your lead coder should be as familiar with the DS and fixed-point math platforms as humanly possible, right down to being able to code for the machine in assembly if you want to get the most out of it. The DS is relatively easy to get into, but getting the most out of it does take some effort.

■ Design to suit the hardware

The DS is surprisingly capable and, in some ways, supersedes the original PlayStation. However, your DS game design should consider the DS's capabilities first and foremost. There's no sense trying to cram a DVD-based PS2 design into the DS – instead, work out how to adapt crucial gameplay elements to the handheld's hardware and make the most of the platform. The best DS game designs recognise this.

■ Iterate quickly in the early stages

With the DS, iteration can and should be fairly rapid. Look to iterate quickly in the prototyping stage and don't be afraid to dump features if they don't gel early on. You should be able to make fundamental code changes and have a new build running on native hardware by the end of the day. Also, commence QA as early as possible, particularly if you're implementing multiplayer, touchscreen control methods or novel uses of other DS features. Again, don't be afraid to tear it up and start again if the feature isn't working as well as you'd hoped.

> *"Commence QA early, particularly if you are implementing multiplayer, touch-screen controls or novel uses of other DS features…"*

ASSET GENERATION

■ Utilise existing assets to save time

As is increasingly common, DS titles often have bigger brothers in development on home console hardware. Assets can often be repurposed, with some optimisation, to the DS. Good time-savers are distant LOD models, which can often be low enough in poly count to serve as main models with a bit of cleaning and re-texturing. Bitmap textures are also easily adapted, as can be most sound assets. Even animation data is reusable, though some keyframes and bones will have to be trimmed. If your design is 2D, bear in mind that you can often render out sprites and backdrops from existing 3D assets.

■ Optimise intelligently from the start

This applies to pretty much all game optimisation, but optimise based on what the user will actually see and experience. For example, if you're making a racing game, remember that the majority of the car won't be visible, so cull polygon detail from the middle and front and focus on the visible back of the car. The same can be applied to most assets. With code optimisation concentrate on getting the core experience as smooth and solid as possible, this may mean you can't implement all the features you'd like to, so prioritise what's important. Somewhere near the top of the list should be a solid frame rate; your latest CPU-heavy AI trick can wait until the next version if it means jerky gameplay.

DS DESIGN CONCERNS

■ Gameplay is still king, and always will be

The primary concern of any DS design should be gameplay. It should not be to make use of the complete hardware feature set, or attempting to break new ground graphically or in terms of control interface. None of it matters if the gameplay isn't up to standard, and with the DS in particular you cannot afford to be lazy. The DS can't rely on eye candy or sandbox open worlds to provide entertainment if the gameplay isn't there. However, the DS can interpret the gameplay of a console game where next-gen visuals and physics are not an integral part of the experience.

■ The DS is played differently

It's easy to forget that the DS is often played in 'dead time' or whilst travelling, so allow for regular saving and order your gameplay into quick bursts. Aim for no more than 15 minutes of gameplay without a save opportunity. Similarly, bear in mind that the learning curve of your game should not be so steep that a player cannot be making progress in a matter of minutes. You cannot rely on users putting in the same effort they would with a console or PC game to get the most out of your DS title.

■ DS features are great, but only if you use them well

Esoteric functionality may look great in a features list, but they need to be fit for purpose. Touchscreen control methods are incredibly tempting to include in DS designs, but you should be 100 per cent certain that the game concept requires it. Mixtures of traditional and touchscreen controls often don't work, so if it's best for gameplay, stick to one or the other.

■ Use the two screens sensibly and intelligently

Twin displays offer a huge range of possibilities, but always bear in mind how the player is going to use them. The user can only actually look at one screen at a time, so minimise the need for players to switch focus from one screen to the other. Make these needs logically consistent within the game, or well signposted when necessary and never demand that the player pays attention to both screens at once. Finally, if

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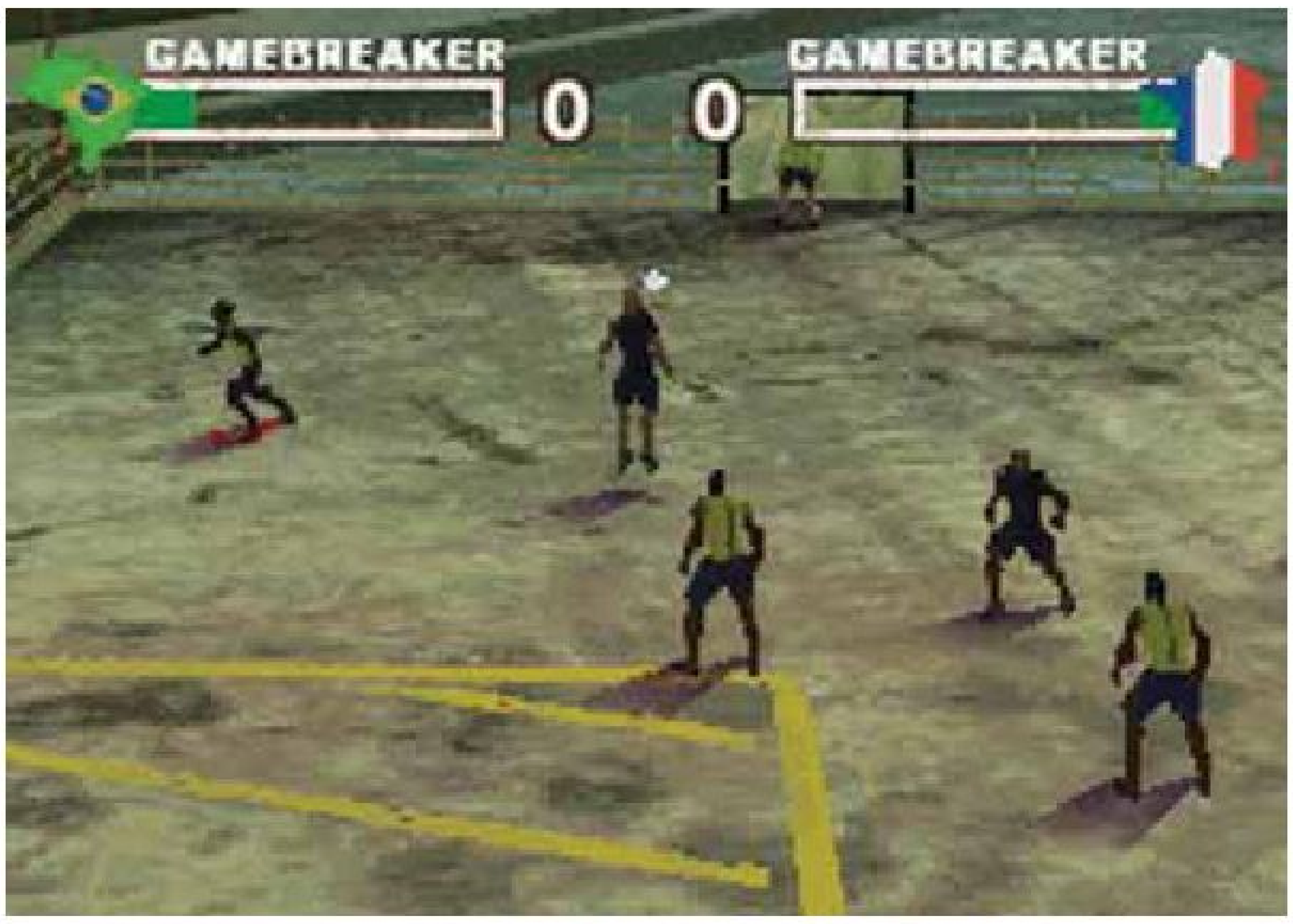
DAMAGE
START
SELECT



you're using the bottom screen as a control surface, avoid putting too much critical visual data there, where it could be hidden by thumbs, fingers or the stylus.

■ Some features are more expensive than others
Some features that seem relatively simple will cause you headaches. QA for multiplayer is always time-intensive, so be aware, plan for this if you must include it and begin QA as early as possible. Online multiplayer comes with its own set design and technology implications, so don't expect to be able to add it in towards the end of the project. It needs to be integrated from the very start.

■ Don't forget that you can design for different audiences
The DS is both gender and age **group agnostic, so make the most of** this freedom. Many DS players will not be familiar with existing methods of play and may be more receptive to new ideas, so experiment with game concepts that don't adhere to traditional gaming values and goals. However, you absolutely need to make sure that core gameplay rules are clear and easy to understand.

■ Study the opposition's failures
Given the numbers of very 'average' DS titles in existence, you'll learn more by looking at what other DS games do wrong than what they do right. The key here is not to copy success, but to learn from other peoples' past mistakes to avoid making your own. Of note here are things like control methods, save points and general interface concerns. A critical aspect to pay attention to is the first 10 minutes of play. It's very easy to get this wrong and swamp the player with disruptive tutorials or too much story exposition.

THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR

■ Know your customer's exact requirements
Make sure you know the exact ROM and EPROM capacities for your project before you start and agree on the feature set as early as possible. Bear in mind that your customer may have unrealistic expectations of the DS and may ask for additional content and functionality to be added at a later date, so if you can allow for contingency, do so.

■ Know your TRCs!
Reference the DS's technical requirement checklist at the design phase. There's little worse than realising you've breached Nintendo's own guidelines just before you go for submission. In-game text is one area to look out for – Nintendo have very specific guidelines for referring to DS features, so make sure any tutorials abide by the official terms.

■ QA may flag bugs that are 'features'
The DS's quirky hardware will produce effects that, as a matter of course, appear to be bugs. Be aware of these issues and be sure to inform the QA team, be it internal or external, of anomalies that are simply artefacts of the hardware rather than coding issues.

■ Test multiplayer functionality thoroughly and constantly
With any feature that uses WiFi, make sure you set up a 'WiFi hostile' environment for testing. This means filling the air with electromagnetic noise, so test your code in the noisiest places you can generate – even if this means bringing in hairdryers, multiple mobile devices, extra wireless networking hardware and so on. When testing online multiplayer, make sure you can connect through though at least two separate unique internet connections – don't rely on both machines connecting to the same router or even the same Internet connection. The more robust the multiplayer code, the more focus QA can place on multiplayer content rather than flagging technical or gameplay issues.

Also ensure multiplayer is tested constantly, from as early in the project as possible. Finally, bear in mind that multiplayer is the one area which can be broken by almost any other area of the game, so make sure your entire team is aware of any 'gotchas' and other potential pitfalls when touching any code which may be used for multiplayer.

www.exient.com

> ***"Reference the DS TRCs. There's little worse than realising you've breached Nintendo's guidelines..."***

***Charles Chapman** and **Dave Hawkins** are, respectively, technical director and managing director of NDS, PSP, PS2, Wii, XBLA developer Exient. The studio has worked on a number of best-selling handheld adaptations of big franchises such as FIFA, Tiger Woods, Need For Speed and Madden.*

08

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p62

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p66

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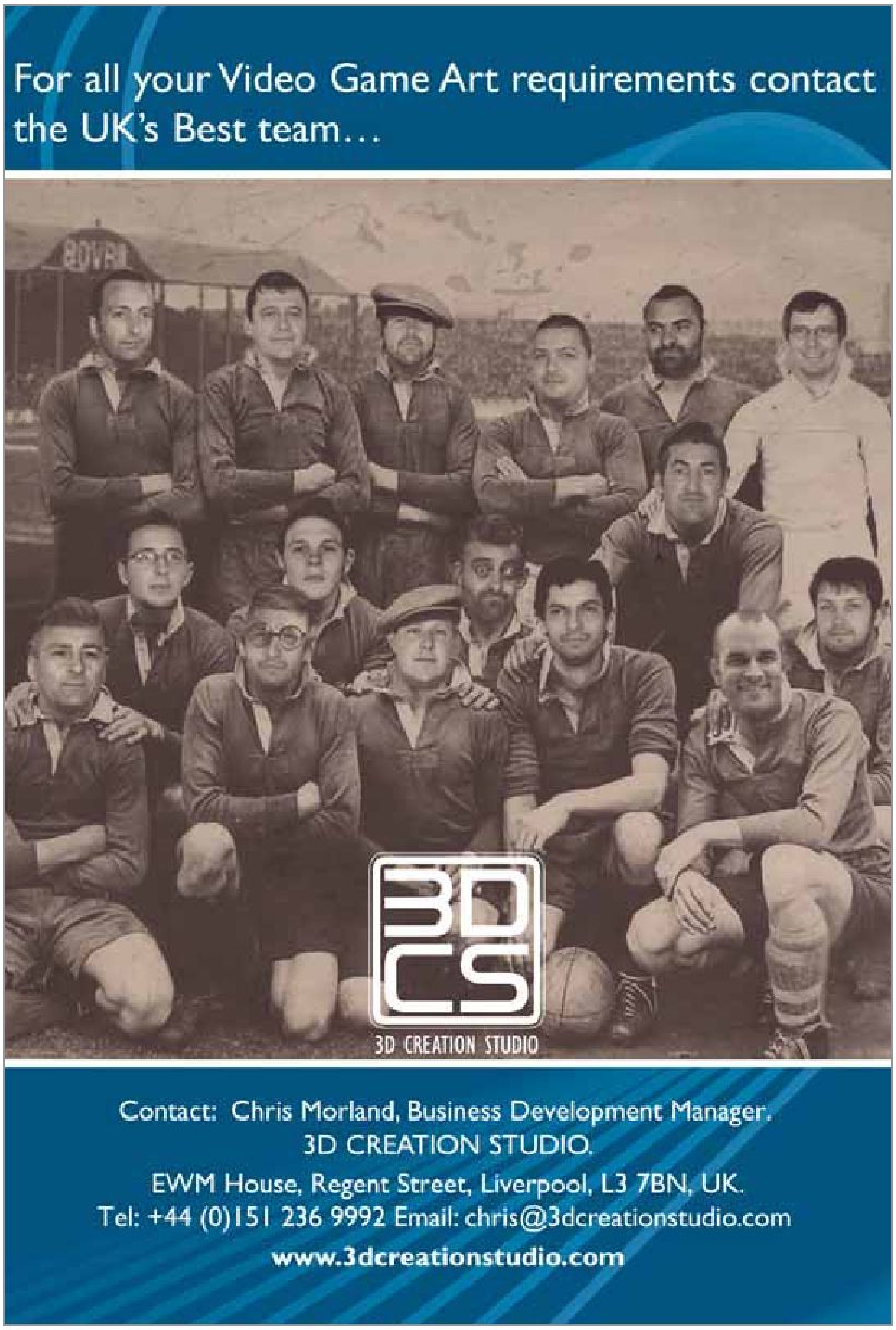
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Studio News

This month: Splash Damage and Black Rock...

Splash Damage has begun its expansion towards multi-platform development, announcing four new recruits and planning for many more.

The studio, which previously worked on *Enemy Territory: Quake Wars*, is looking to almost double its size to 60 people in order to embark on the multi-platform development of its latest unannounced project, a partnership with *Oblivion* developer Bethesda Softworks.

The new recruits to the SD fold are (*above, from left to right*): Olivier Leonardi, who joins as art director having previously worked at Ubisoft on *Rainbow Six: Vegas* and *Prince of Persia: The Two Thrones*; ex-Criterion employee Chris Sweetman as audio director; Tim Appleby, previously of Bioware, as lead creative artist; and new producer Chris Dawson, who has worked on games as diverse as *Driver* and *Evil Genius*.

"I couldn't be more excited about this influx of amazing talent to Splash Damage, especially as we start developing for multiple platforms," added Paul Wedgwood, owner and creative director of Splash Damage.

"Their experience and knowledge are a hugely positive contribution to Splash Damage and will help us further establish Splash Damage as one of the up-and-coming studios in the world."

New art director Olivier Leonardi added: "I'm thrilled to be working here at Splash Damage. These guys treat each game as a unique creative exercise, rather than just going through the motions year after year, and that really impresses me."

www.splashdamage.com

Disney's Brighton, UK-based **Black Rock Studio** has scored a racing development personnel coup: the studio has hired Criterion Games' former creative manager Paul Glancey.

Glancey takes the role of franchise design director on Black Rock's second new racing IP for 360 and PS3, currently being developed alongside new off-road racer *Pure*.

Glancey started out his games career as a staff writer on beloved UK games magazine *ZZAP! 64* in 1988. He later became associate editor of *Computer and Video Games* and then editor of *MegaTech*, also contributing to *Mean Machines*, *Nintendo Magazine* and *Sega Saturn Magazine*.

After ten years writing about games, Glancey moved into developing them. He joined Eidos as senior product evaluator in 1998.

In September 2000, he joined Criterion as creative manager where he worked on *Airblade* and the *Burnout* series of games. He had a significant hand in the design of *Burnout 3: Takedown*, *Burnout Revenge* and recent release *Burnout Paradise*.

Glancey commented on his new role: "It's a stellar opportunity for me to work with a team that has such a great track record in the racing genre and has such a passion for pushing the genre further."

Tony Beckwith, VP and GM of Black Rock Studio added: "Having worked on *Burnout 3: Takedown*, *Burnout Revenge* and *Burnout Paradise*, Paul has a great pedigree in racing game design and development and is a valuable addition to our studio."

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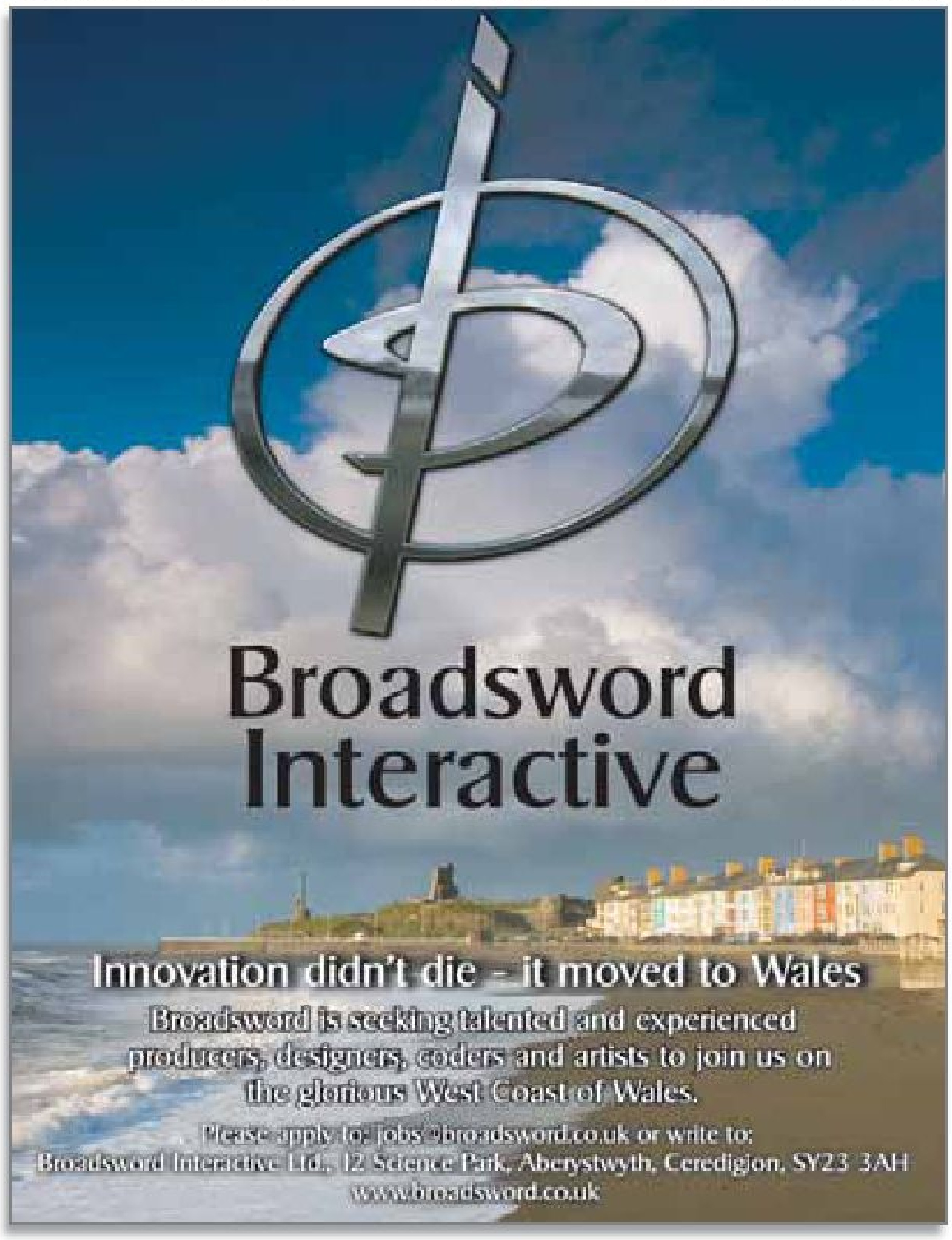
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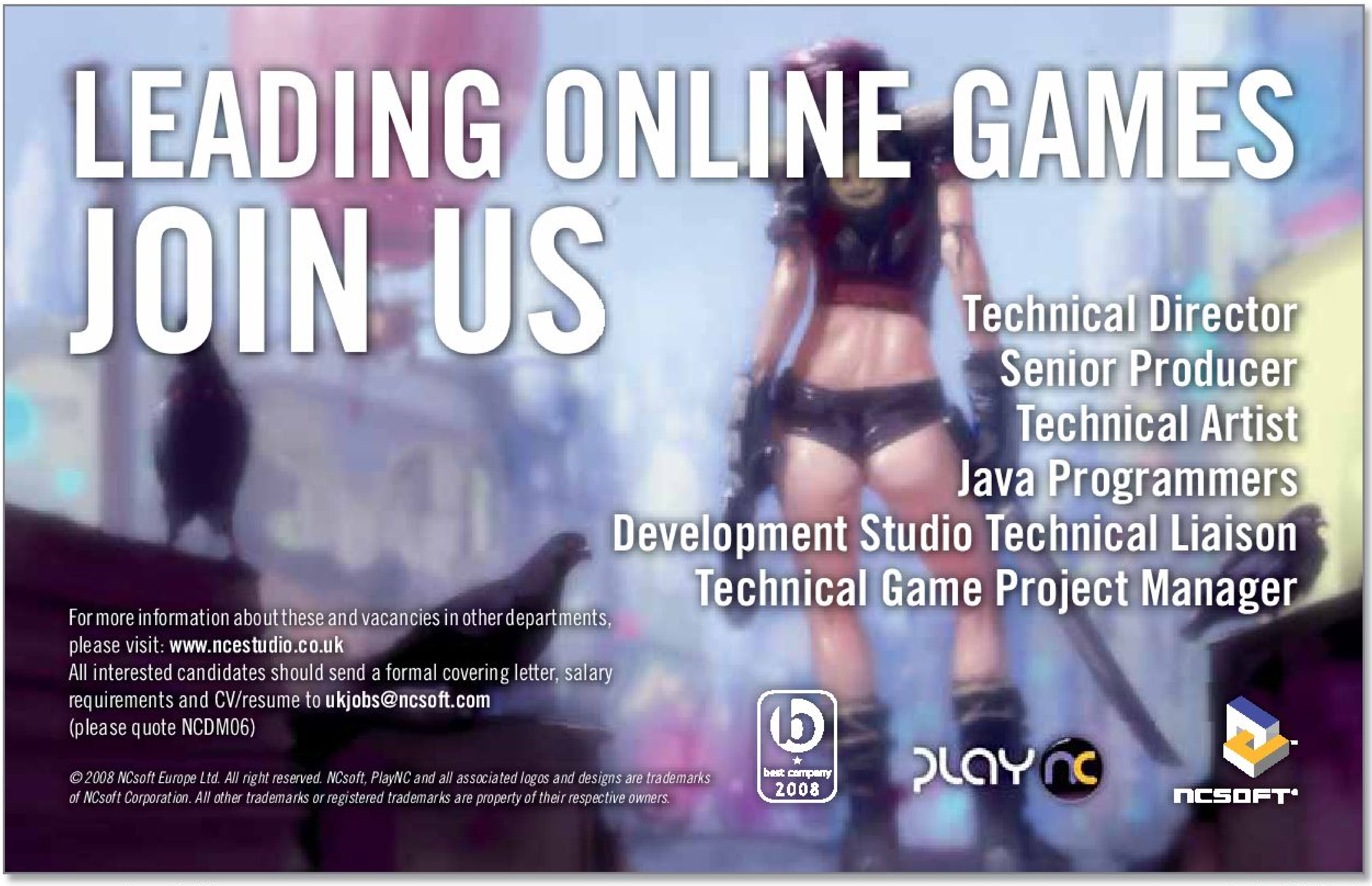
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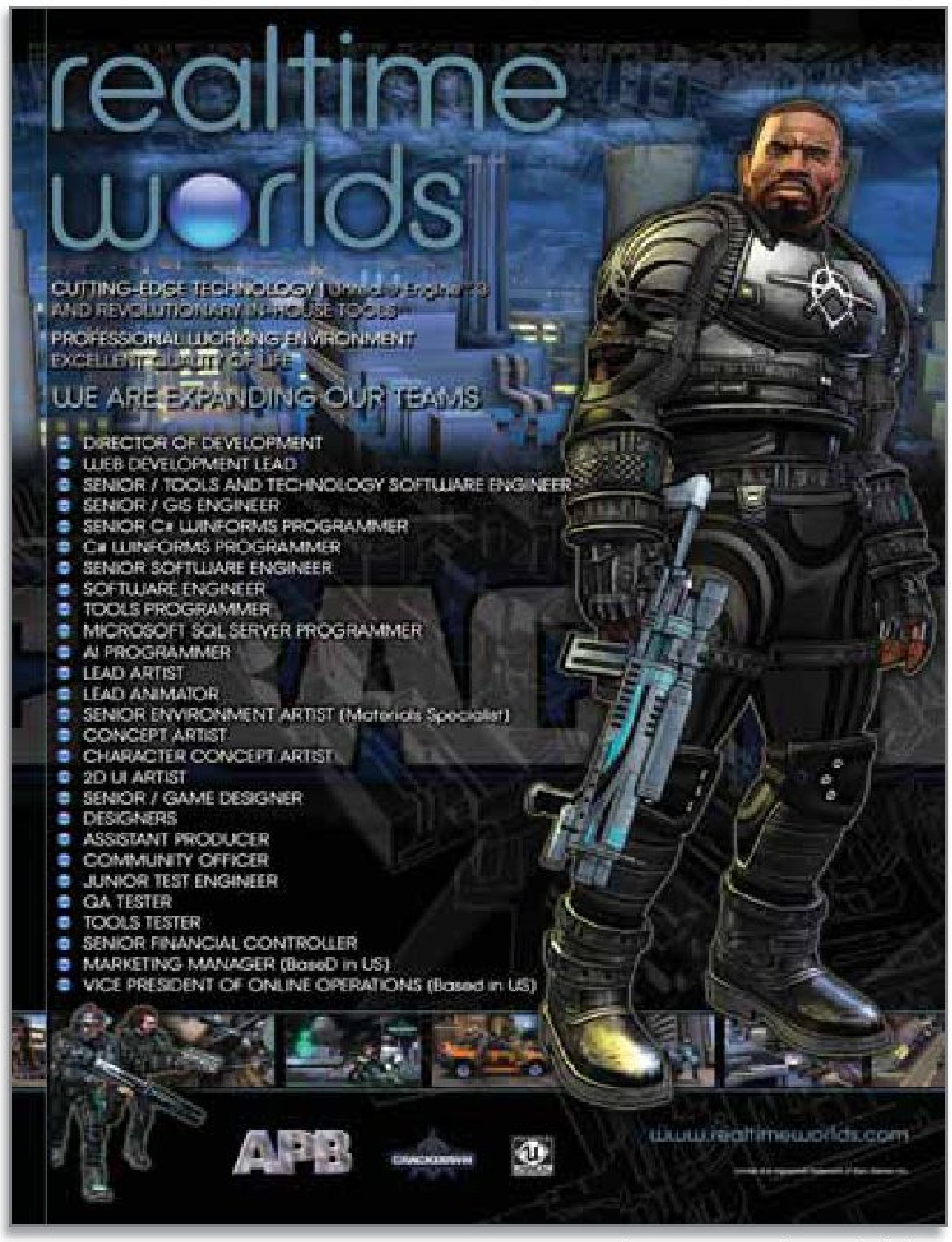

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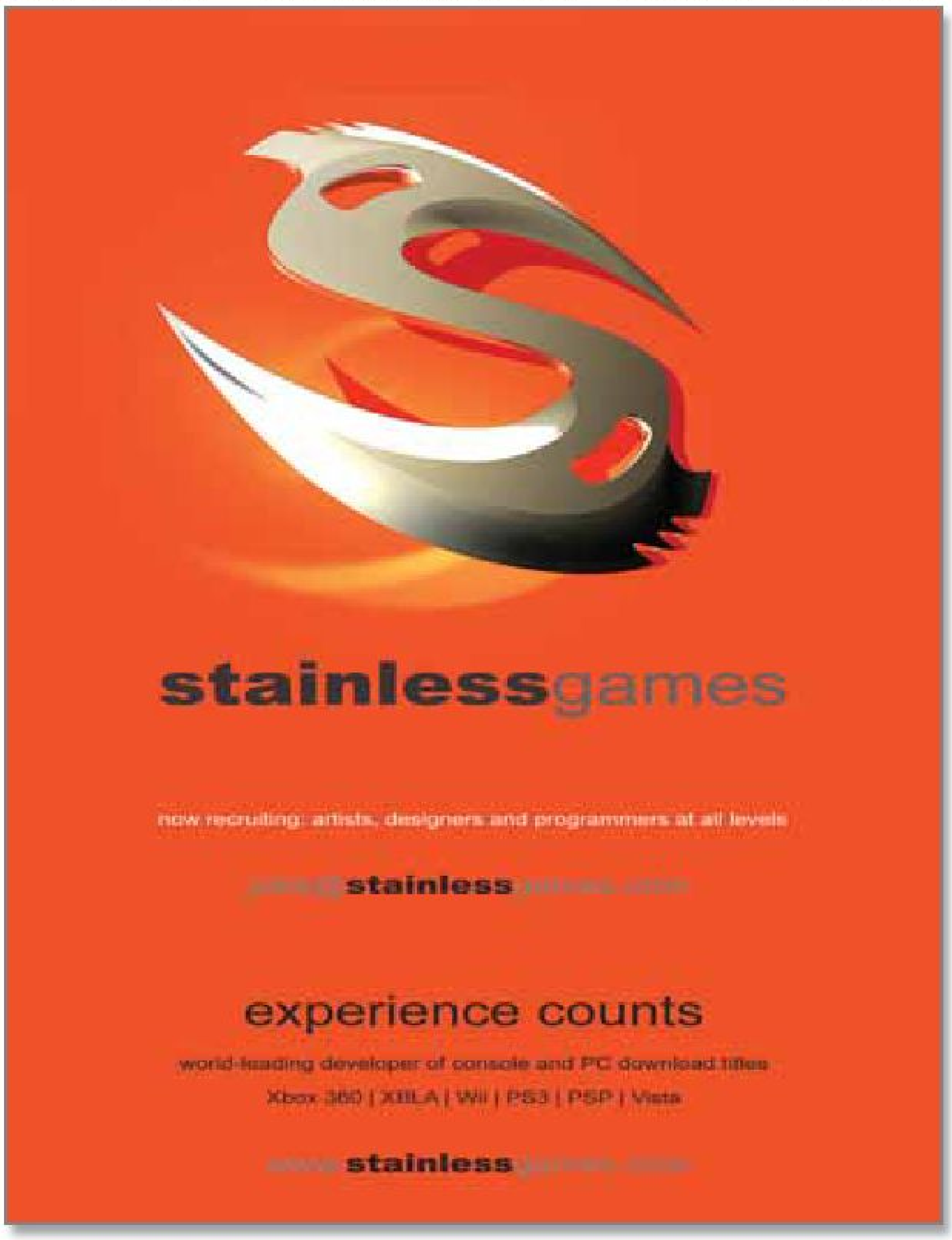

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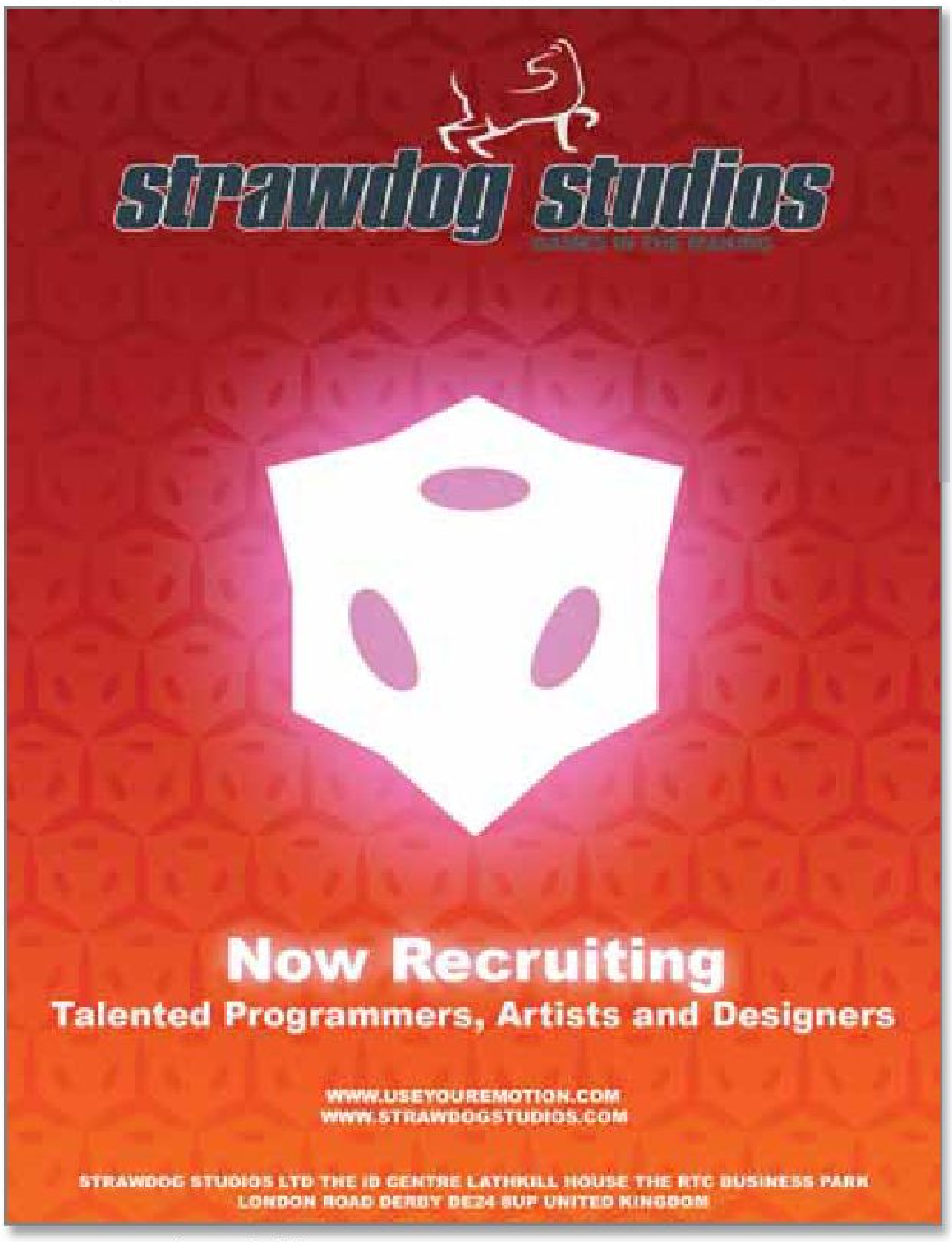

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Tools News

ProFX free for Gamebryo licensees

Emergent is offering free licences to Allegorithmic's ProFX texturing tool to all its Gamebryo users.

The offer comes to celebrate the integration of the two applications, and is valid until the end of September on all projects except MMOs.

Emergent and Allegorithmic are also offering training sessions that will help Gamebryo customers master ProFX and its authoring tool, MapZone.

"Emergent's partner program puts the industry's best tools and technology into the hands of Gamebryo developers. The integration with ProFX enables Gamebryo customers to easily take advantage of Allegorithmic's procedural texturing tool to allow more rapid iteration of art assets," said John Austin, VP of technical partners and academics at Emergent.

This deal follows Allegorithmic's participation in Tech Connection, Emergent's Certified Partner Program, and echos the similar work between audio specialist Audiokinetic and Gamebryo earlier this year.

www.emergent.net

TRUESPACE 7.6 SET FREE

Caligari has released the latest version of its long-running trueSpace all-in-one 3D app for free.

The company was purchased by Microsoft earlier this year in order to strengthen its Virtual Earth project. In order to give new users a helping hand with the software, the company has also made its library of training videos available for free.

"We are taking the unprecedented step of making these tools available to everyone for free in order to stimulate content creation for the present and future online 3D environments, and so that any artist out there with a dream can fulfill their vision without finding themselves trapped by budget limitations," wrote Caligari CEO Roman Ormandy on his blog.

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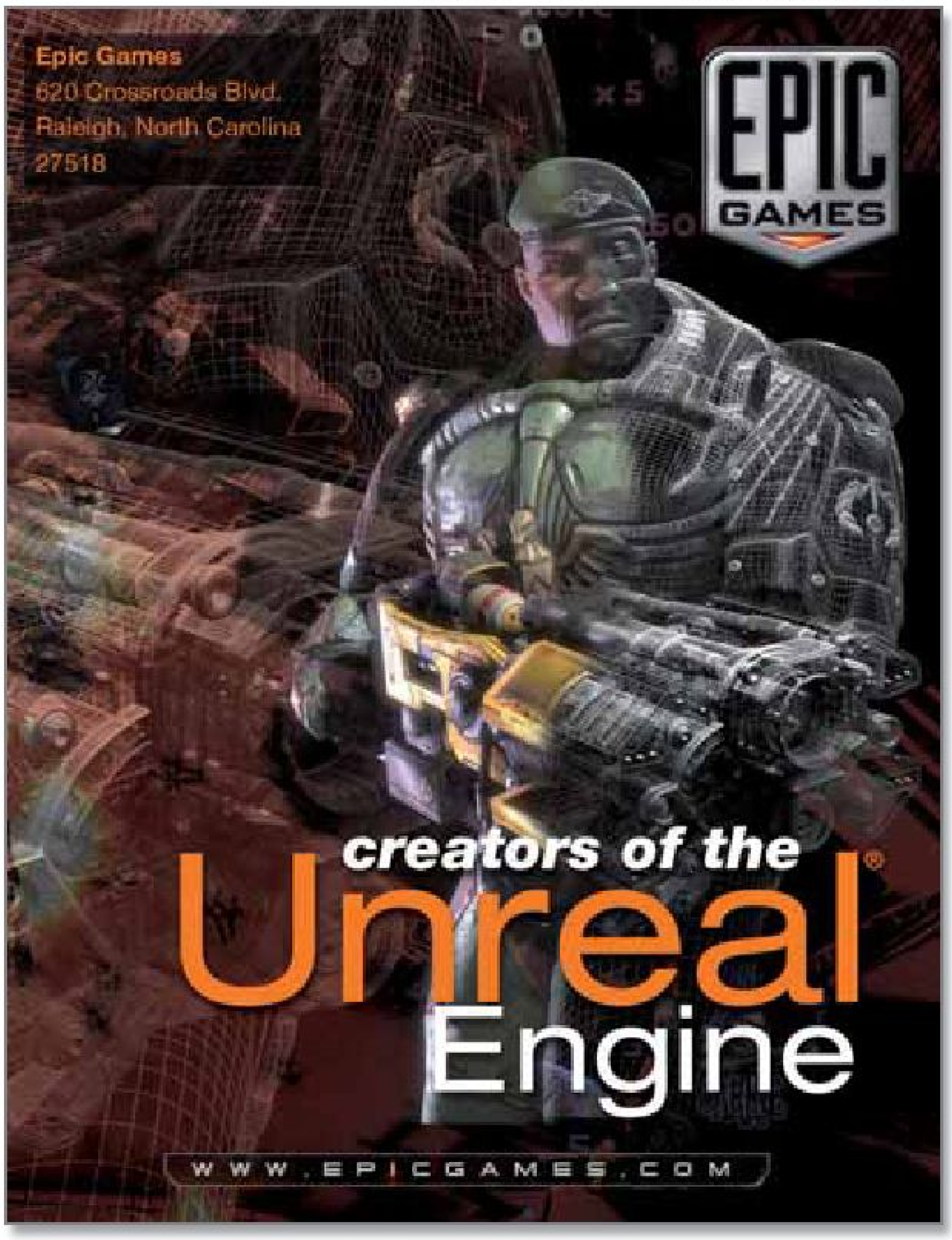

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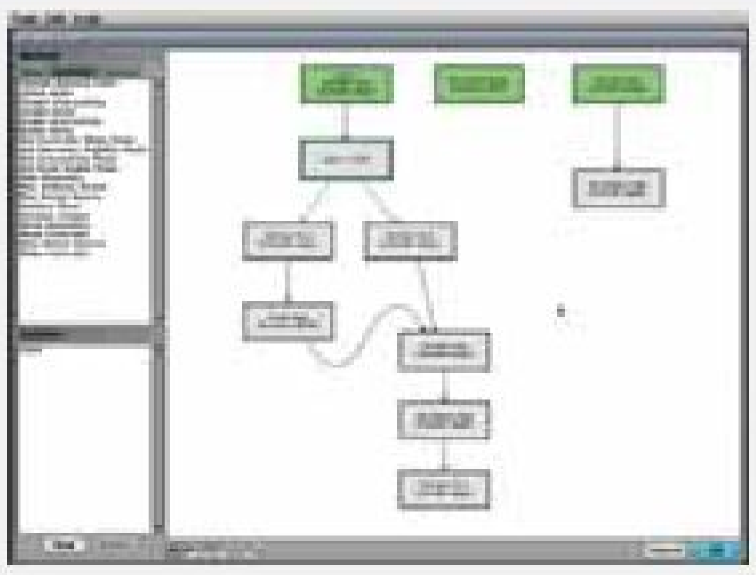
Tool Spotlight

C4 ENGINE



Terathon's C4 engine may have all the hallmarks of an upper-class indie engine – a cheap-but-not-that-cheap price tag of $350, a list of high-end features as long as your arm – but it's the thought that's gone behind the engine, and its integrated editors, that really set it apart from the competition.

Developed by lone coder Eric Lengyel, the fully-integrated world builder (which allows levels to be constructed, not just the layout of entities) and graphical script editor reminiscent of Unreal's Kismet ease the toolchain stress that can so easily be caused by other contemporary (and cheaper) engines such as Torque. It's tempting to print the whole features list, but given that we've not got three pages we'll simply mention the funky-sounding support for things like Cook-Torrance microfacet surface reflection, horizon mapping, real-time cloth and fluid surface simulation, Doppler shift on sound effects and cross-platform internet voice chat.

CONTACT: info@terathon.com
www.terathon.com/c4engine

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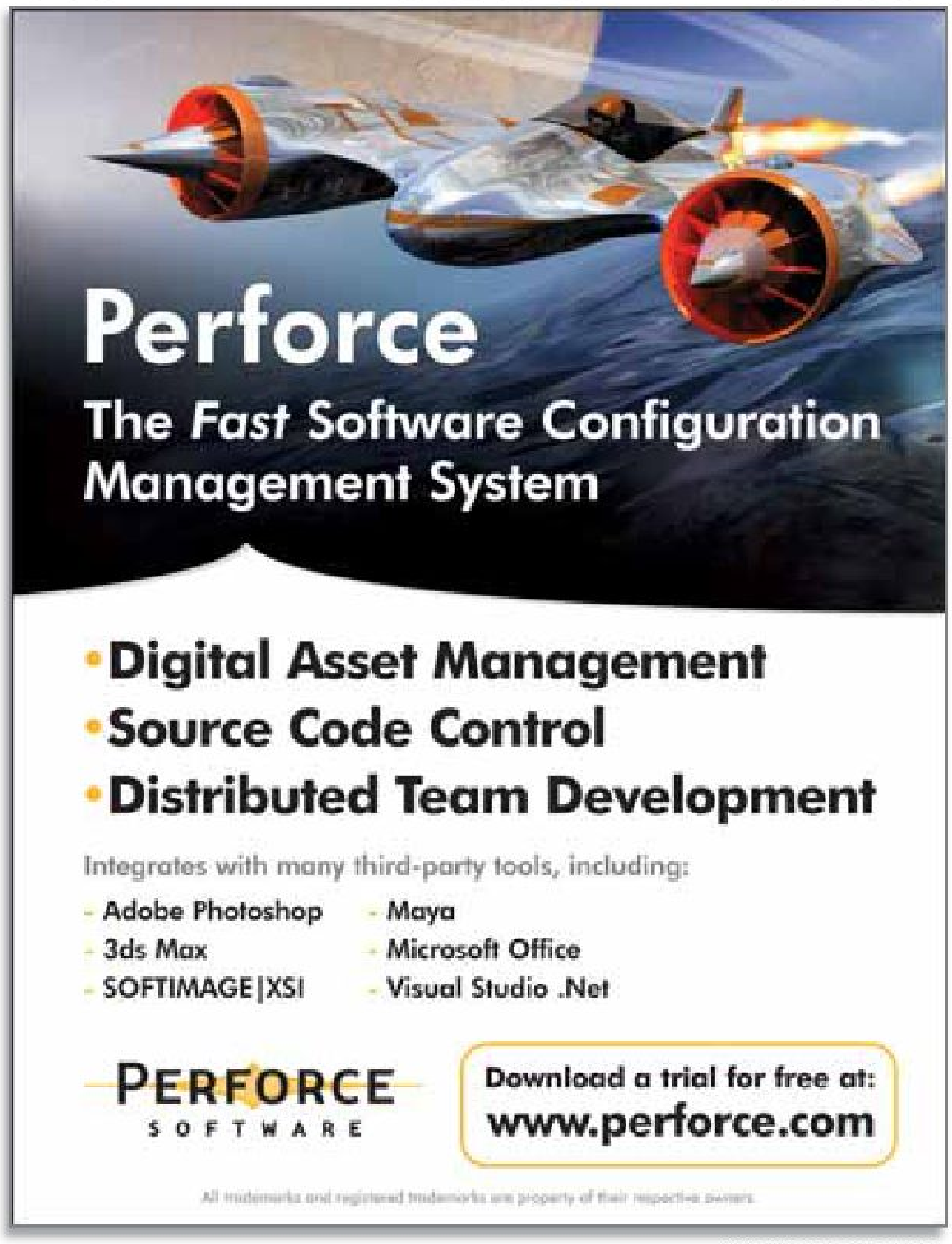
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Services News

Outsourcer ChaYoWo opens own studio

Indian outsourcing firm ChaYoWo has established a new studio in the country dedicated to casual games.

ChaYoWo Games' new dev center and studio is located in Kochi, Kerela, two hours from India capital Mumbai.

The new facility will boast 100 staff by December, the company said, saying its game designers, artists, animators and programmers will be offering development, game art and animation, and testing outsourcing services to causal gaming companies in the US and Europe. The new team will be working on developing ChaYoWo's proprietary game development efforts.

"Our new game development center and studio offers our employees a workspace with state-of-the-art technology and robust collaborate working spaces to interact with each other to develop games for our clients and partners," said Gaurav Mirchandani, co-founder of ChaYoWo Games.

www.chayowogames.com

GOOGLE READYING IN-GAME ADVERTISING SERVICE?

Google's AdSense is finally set to become a viable in-game advertising solution, according to a report from VentureBeat.

"Sources close to the matter said that the company has developed an in-game advertising technology that allows it to insert video ads into games," says the report, adding that a demo shows in-game characters themselves presenting ads to players with 'words from our sponsor'-like intros.

The report adds that Google could move quickly as the technology is finished.

Google has been expected to make a move into in-game advertising – challenging dominating firms IGA and Double Fusion, plus their contemporaries MochiAds and GameJacket – since it acquired AdSense last year, but has been slow to move.

Apparently, Google's in-game ad tech works with console games, PC games, web-based PC games and mobile games – although it hasn't been demoed directly to insiders just yet, the report adds.

www.google.com

EA DICE PICKS PRATCHETT FOR MIRROR'S EDGE

EA's Swedish studio DICE has announced that games writer Rhianna Pratchett has been hired to pen the script for its upcoming game *Mirror's Edge*.

Pratchett previously wrote scripts for games such as *Heavenly Sword* and *Overlord* and has been writing for games for over 10 years.

"It was a great experience working with the team at DICE to help breathe life into [lead character] Faith; her world, relationships and backstory," said Pratchett.

"My heroines and heroes have always been the ones who were ordinary, but through the events of a story, became extraordinary. Faith is skilled, but she's certainly not a superhero. She has her flaws, like all of us. In short: she's real. That's her appeal."

www.rhiannapratchett.com

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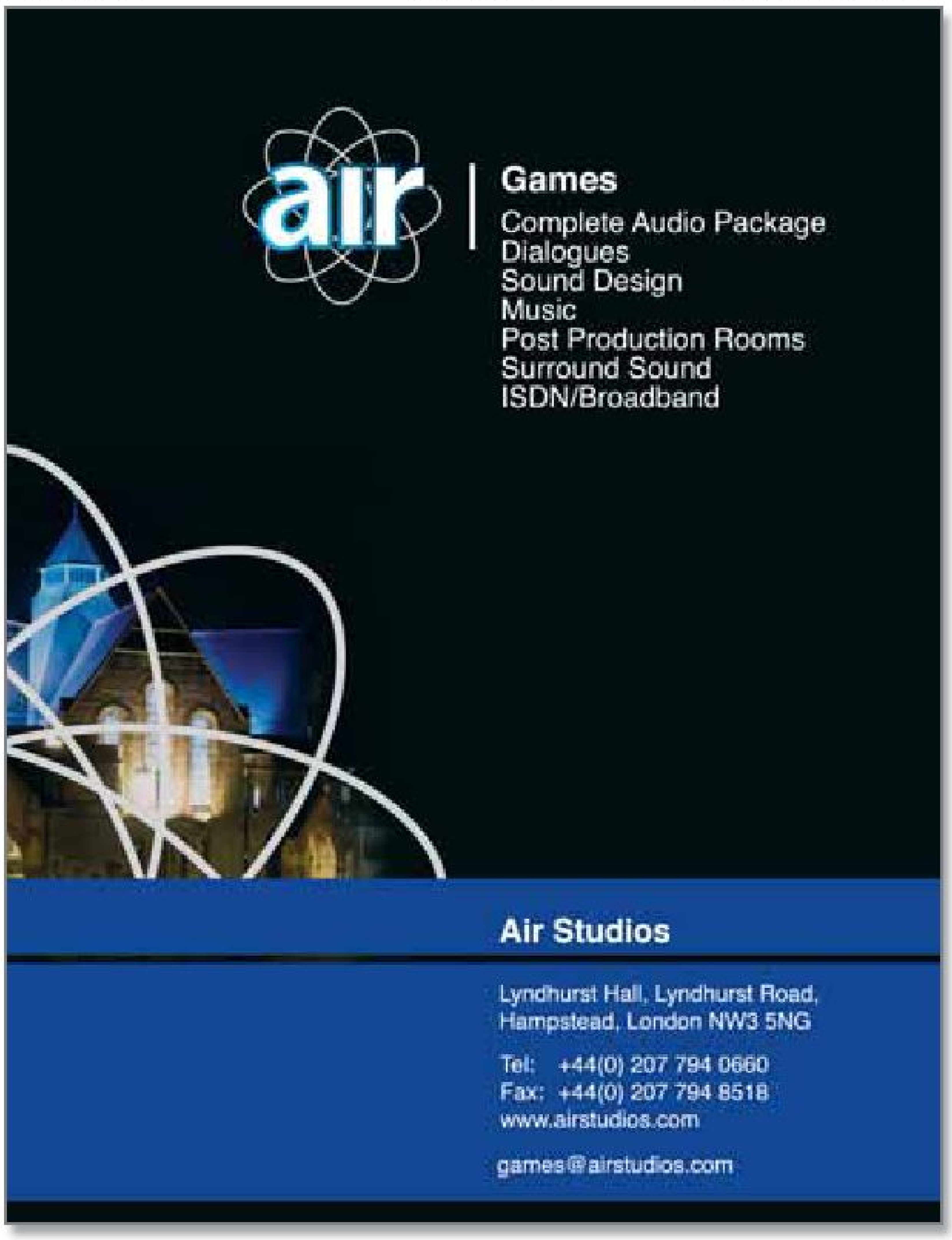

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Broadband Entertainment Lead Programmer / Software Architect - London

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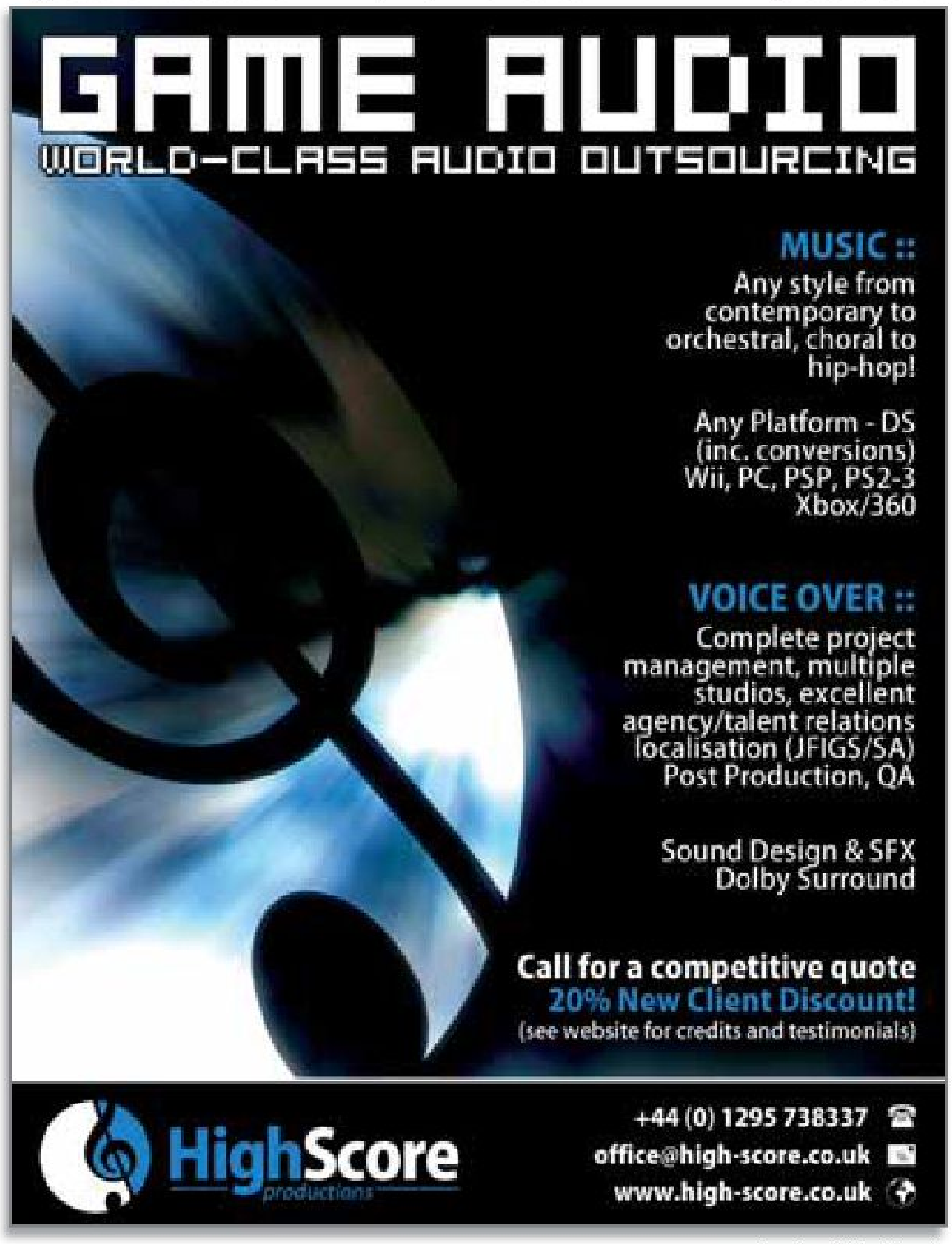

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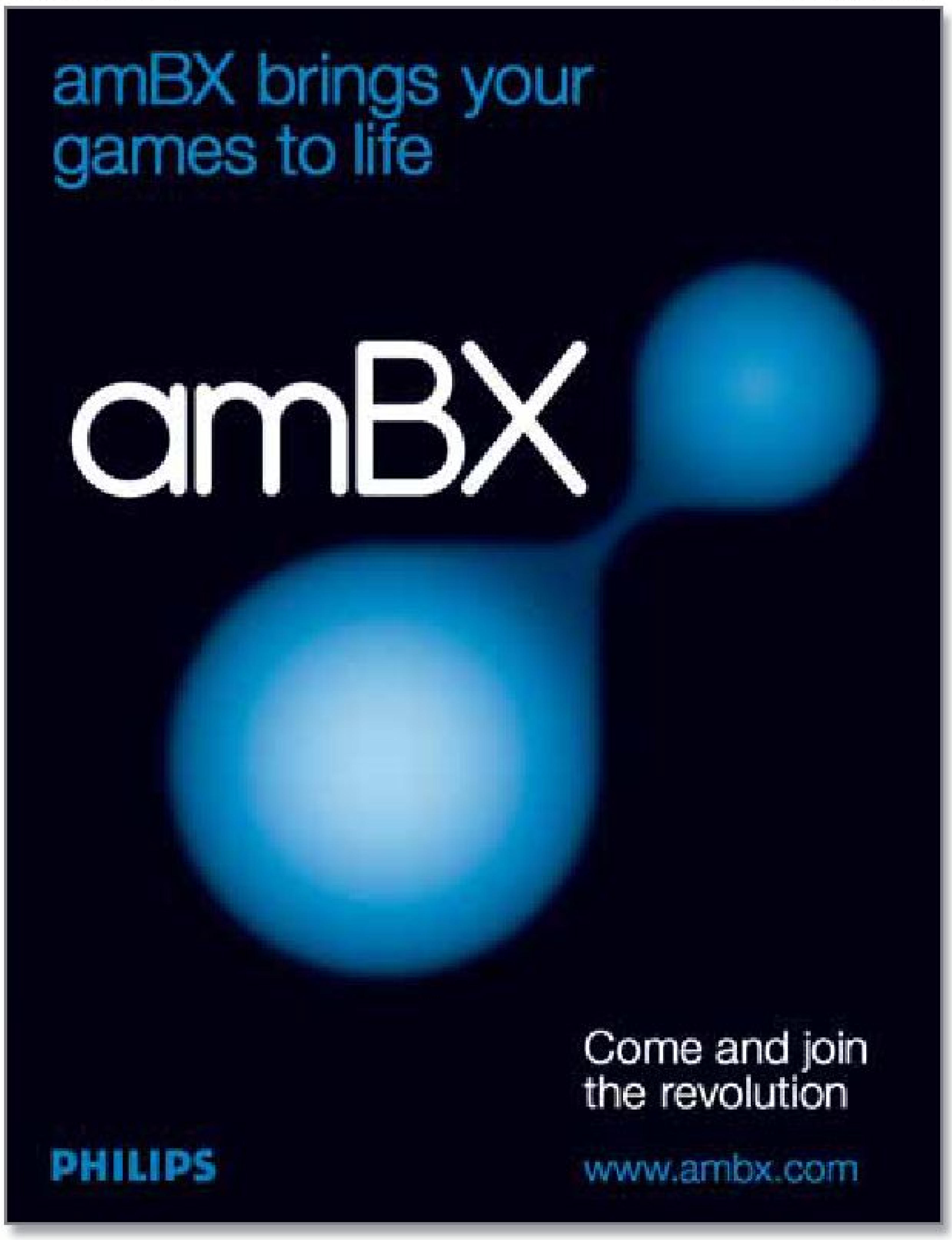

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Price: Royalty share with publisher

A Mac version of your game might not have been a big priority several years ago, but the switch from PowerPC to Intel chips and the continuing expansion of the userbase thanks to the iPod and iTunes have made it more of an interesting platform. Enter TransGaming's Cider to ease the pain: essentially a wrapper, Cider loads the Windows game into memory and links it to an optimised version of the Win32 API, and maps other Windows APIs such as Direct3D, DirectSound and DirectInput to Mac equivalents. No source code needs to be changed, and the whole process – which is done in collaboration with TransGaming, hence categorisation as a 'service' rather than as off-the-shelf tools or middleware – usually takes from several hours to a few days, with TransGaming helping on specific optimisations as well.

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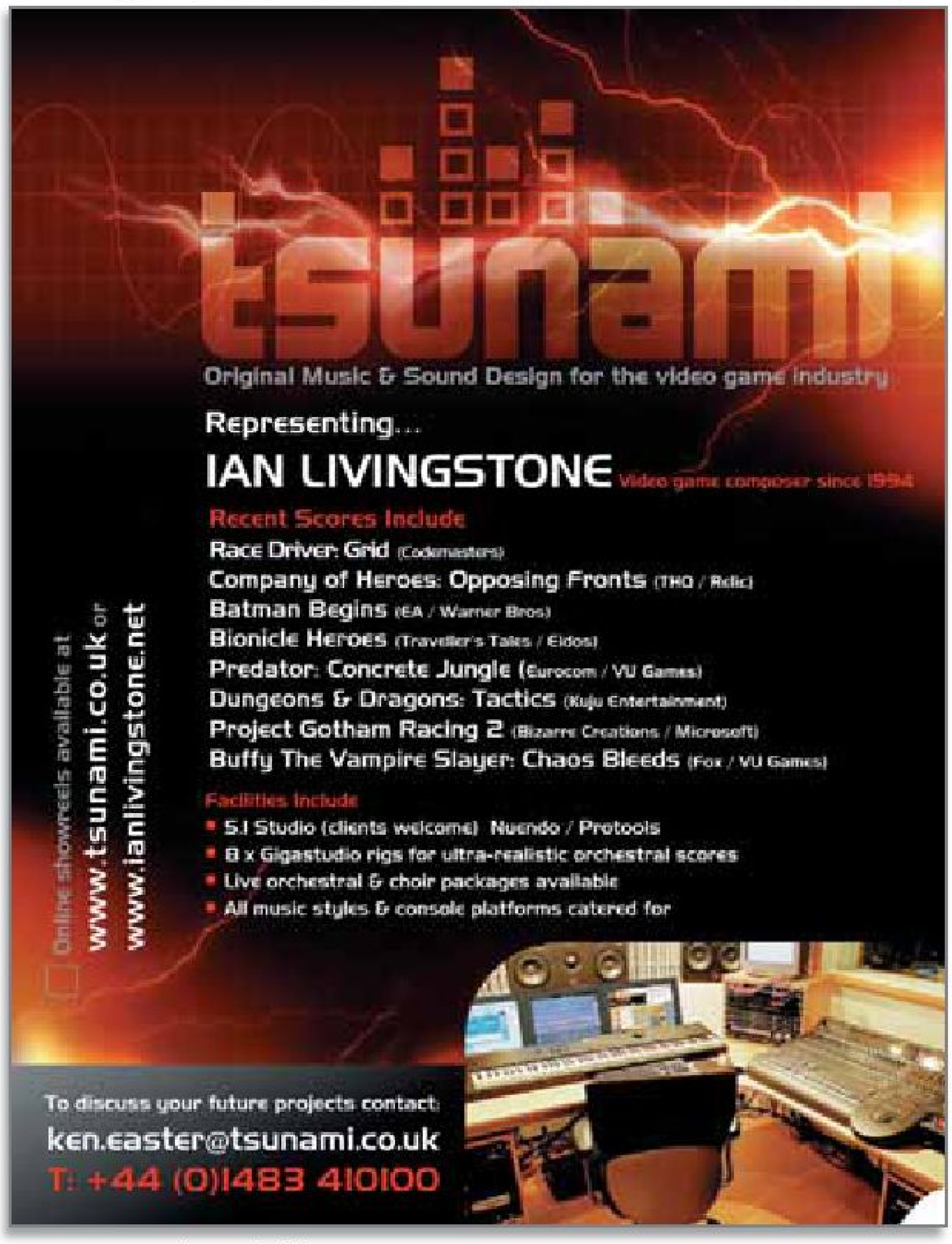
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Training News

Bigworld launches education programme

Australian MMO middleware company BigWorld has announced its intent to provide educators with learning resources and support services for courses involving MMO and virtual world development.

In order to spearhead the move, which the firm says is designed to counter the exclusive use of peer-to-peer networked engines in most contemporary games courses, it has hired Adam Shaw as its new education programme manager.

"We have many months of hard work ahead with educational partners to get this initiative off the ground," said BigWorld CEO John De Margheriti.

"These games are much more complex to develop for and this is a pro-active approach to prevent an industry shortage of experienced MMO developers, particularly game programmers and game designers."

www.bigworldtech.com

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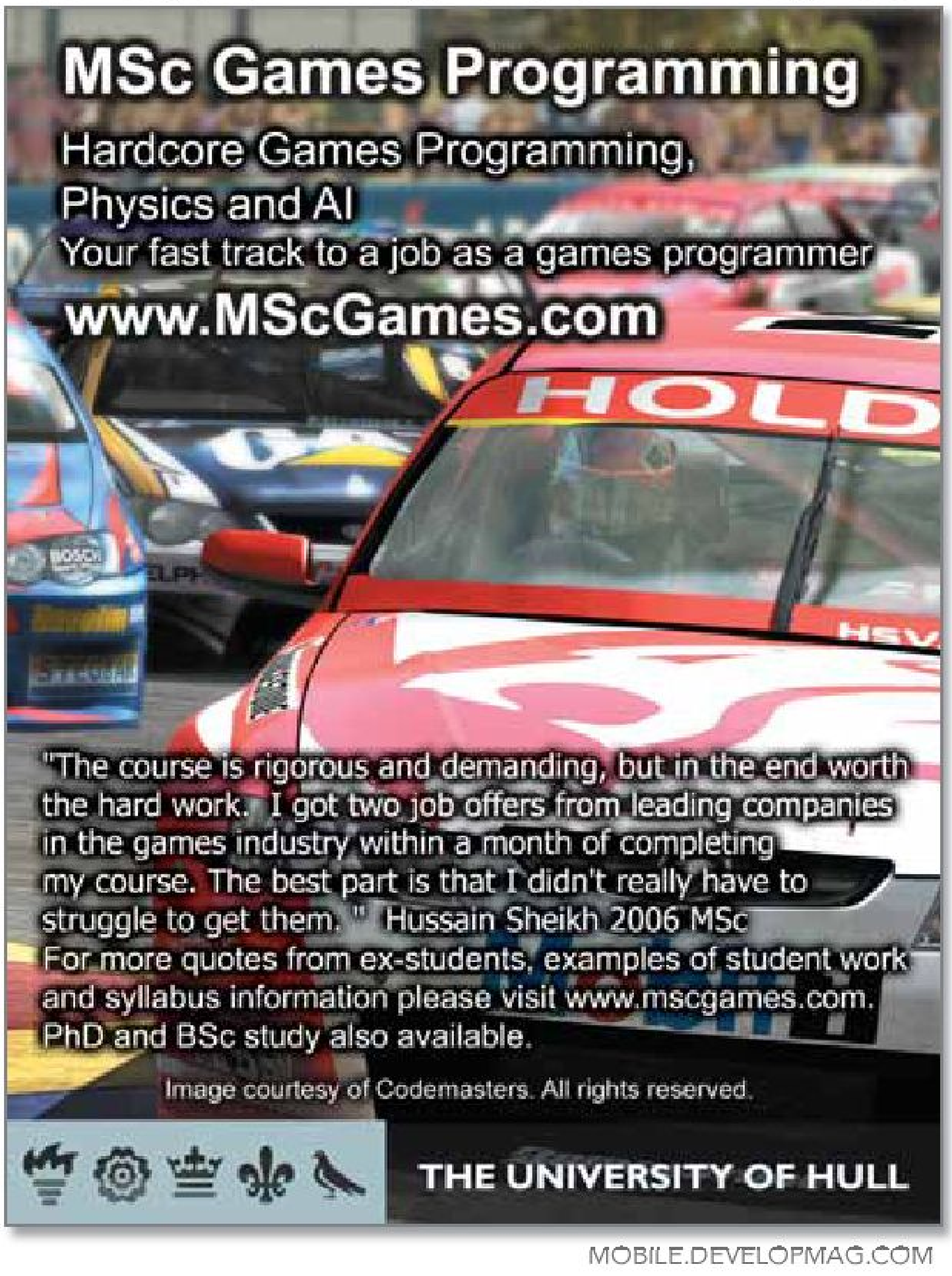

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THE BYRONIC MAN

Simon Byron is App in arms over the iPhone…

Well, they were right in some respects: The iTunes application store certainly was a "game changer".

From the off, it had the potential: a mass-market, licence-free handheld, with no physical publishing costs, the iPhone 3G could have heralded the start of direct-to-consumer distribution, freeing us from the shackles of those horrid retailers. Innovation could thrive. Originality would be king. A new golden age of gaming.

So within minutes of flinging it open its virtual door, it was clear those games really had changed.

Because they're no longer games at all. The bulk of the iTunes catalogue reads like a Chinese whisper: slight variations on titles of popular free online games, each lovingly compressed and diluted to accommodate a control method premiered when the French failed to cut our archers' fingers off.

Double-tap here; tap-drag there. Rotate the screen until you can no longer see it to move forward – it was like someone had asked a bunch of children to describe what games they wanted to play, and published them directly without bothering to playtest. The commercial efforts I've paid and played are, without exception, abject disappointments, the iTunes application store proving the gaming equivalent of photographs on a menu.

> ***"The commercial efforts I've paid and played are, without exception, abject disappointments…"***

Yes, Super Monkey Ball looks impressive, but it's basically impossible to play. Anyone who argues otherwise is deluded, trying to save face after being mugged for £5.99. *De Blob* is interesting on paper, but the stuttering frame rate and schizophrenic controls reinforce the fact that even the simplest of ideas simply don't work on the format.

On the one hand, the iPhone's lack of physical input devices permits brave new Wii-too control methods. But on the other hand, the games just don't work. Try playing one of Namco's ubiquitous arcade ports they just don't feel right. But still, it did pander to my obsessive compulsive side, which requires me to buy a version of *Ms Pac-Man* on every electronic format, no matter how inappropriate. Thankfully Namco's OCD requires them to provide this, too.

Logitech must be laughing. For a firm that has built its fortunes on shoving game-enhancing features onto inappropriate consoles – 'make your Game Boy Color look like a 50-inch plasma by simply welding this massive magnifying glass to your eyes!' – there's a host of ludicrous add-ons demanding to be manufactured. Top of the list would be a joystick, followed by some shoulder buttons. If it's being touted as a gaming format, it should at least behave like one.

Still, with all these obstructions, we've been able to embrace the much-heralded second coming: casual games. The types of games we're lead to believe housewives are playing all day instead of tidying their homes.

Match coloured blocks, arrange shapes into patterns, pick out identical blocks; they're basically the sort of activities we get babies to do in order to encourage their development, so it's no surprise these wimmin will pass the time with such gormless activity when they're not gambling away the house keeping.

Of course, there are some types of games which are suited to the format. Traditional brain-teasers, for example, or pen-and-paper puzzles, without the need for a pen or paper. Given the popularity of Sudoku, you'd expect there to be a few versions released. But 20? Do we really have such a paucity of imagination that 10 per cent of games release on day one were Sudoku clones? Clearly…

By concentrating on casual games, we're alienating the iPhone's core audience: men prepared to spend five hours queuing in Regent Street just to get their hands on one. Men with money to burn. Not women old enough to drink horse piss.

The iPhone 3G is a great piece of kit. It's ideal for games with low expectations: advertising-supported or homebrew titles selling for a couple of dollars. But raise the price, and you raise expectations.

With *Super Monkey Ball* sitting high at the top of the charts, it's clear there's a real demand for gaming content – but after the poor implementation of pretty much every commercial title I've played, I can't help feeling cheated. "It's as powerful as a Dreamcast," we've been told. Let's hope iPod Touch gaming doesn't suffer a similar fate.

simon@thetriforce.com

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